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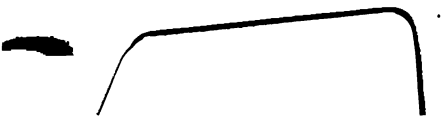
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THE BOY'S WALTON




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THE BOY'S WALTON



THE BOY'S WALTON

A Discourse on Fishing

BY

ULICK J. BURKE, B.A.

With Illustrations



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THE BOY'S WALTON.

PART I.—THE POND.

CHAPTER I.

Now, as an angler melancholy standing
Upon a greene bancke yielding room for landing,
A wrigling yellow worm thrust on his hooke,
Now in the midst he throwes, then in a nooke;
Here pulls his line, there throws it in againe,
Mending his croke and baite, but all in vain,
He long stands viewing of the curled streame;
At last a hungry pike, or well-growne breame,
Snatch at the worm, and hasting fast away
He, knowing it a fish of stubborne sway,
Puls up his rod, but soft (as having skill),
Wherewith the hooke fast holds the fishe's gill.

BROWNE'S *Pastorals.*

THE summer holidays had come at length! The last lesson had been said, the last boy whipped; every box had been packed; finally, the last fly had rattled away from the door of Dr. Birchem's Academy, and George

and Harry had arrived, full of delightful anticipation, at Merryside Hall, to spend a few weeks of well-earned leisure with Uncle Mark.

Oh! the rapture of those early days of release from the discipline and toil of school life. Oh! to wake in the morning to the recollection that no horrid bell is to disturb those last moments of precious repose, and call us to the labours of the day, under the critical eye of Dr. Birchem and his inquisitors. How ecstatic to welcome the holiday sun, and to feel that the day is all before us, and that a vista opens in which week will succeed week in a course of unvarying delight!

George leaped from his bed at least an hour earlier than good Dr. Birchem would have required of him, and without much care as to the correct sit of his cravat, and perhaps, indeed, without allowing much time for such a rhapsody as the above, was in a very short time standing in Harry's room.

"Get up, Hal, it's *such* a day," he exclaims, and in a very few minutes Harry also is in his clothes.

Then there is a scamper through the half-wakened house, and a burst over the dew-covered lawns to the stables. What questions they ask! What critical observations are made! What changes are noted! Everybody is glad to see Master George and Master Harry; for the keen interest the two brothers take in all the departments of the Merryside Hall establishment gives a brightness and zest to the work that goes on there. First the colt is inspected, then two ponies (so shaggy as to look almost like a couple of sky-terriers) have their turn—two ponies which Aunt Fanny usually drives in her little pony carriage, but which have to get through such an astonishing amount of racing and other forms of active exercise, whilst the boys are at home, as would astonish the most exacting of Newmarket trainers.

Then the garden is glanced at; neither George nor Harry, it is true, have as yet evinced much taste for horticulture, but Jones, the old gardener, is a dear friend, and there is one Jem, the gardener's boy, the comrade of almost all their exploits—from the assault on

the hornets' nest in the oak tree, and the running of certain contraband tins of gunpowder, down to the more legitimate occupations of cricket and bottom-fishing—for whom they have almost as much regard as for each other.

After the garden comes a visit, of absorbing interest, to the gamekeeper's lodge; a visit rendered even more important than usual, by the recent arrival of a litter of pointer puppies, and the purchase of a new Irish retriever. Oh! those puppies! What mysterious property is it which invests the poor, blind, helpless little mortals with so much importance in the eyes of youth? How wistfully mother Juno regards her precious offspring, as one by one they are taken from her maternal control, and hauled, and pulled, and rolled over, and critically examined; and how thankfully she receives back each one of her yapping brood, ignorant, perhaps, that her liver-eared darling has been sentenced to the horse trough, whilst her dun-spotted pet has got but a hardly conceded reprieve from the young masters, whose hands she licks so lovingly and so joyously!

But the morning has advanced, and soon Uncle Mark is down, and, standing on the steps of the Hall, is shading his eyes in search of his nephews.

"George! George! where are you? And Hal, you monkey, come here," he calls. "It is breakfast-time, and we have much to do."

"What have we to do?" exclaimed both in a breath.

"To eat our breakfast first, and then to learn our lessons," says Uncle Mark, with a sly twinkle in his eye; for Uncle Mark will have his joke, as the boys know.

"George," he says, when the two lads, whose appetite has been whetted by the morning air, have despatched a meal sufficient to maintain a regiment. "George and Harry, come into my study; I must set you your task for the day. What! you look ill-satisfied! There is no pleasing boys now-a-days. One would have thought you would have been missing your daily 'hic, hæc, hoc,' by this time, and would be glad to welcome your old friend again! No! then a little Greek grammar! Dear! dear! there is no satisfying you. Never mind, there is the rod, I

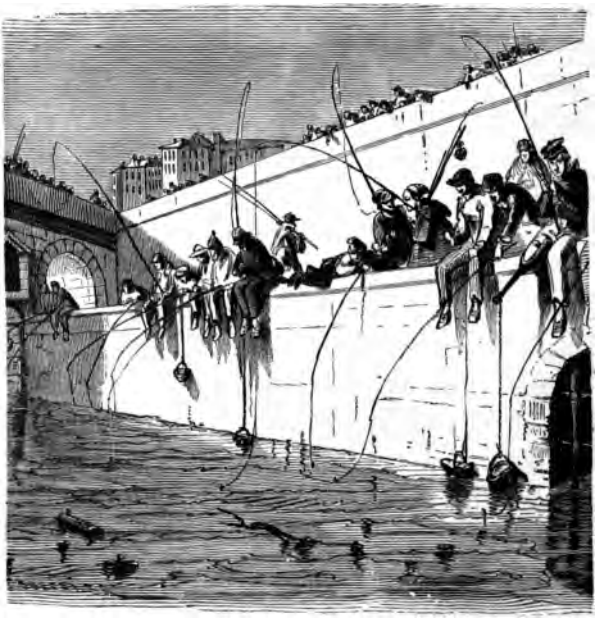
vouch that will please you, there is such a touch of auld lang syne about it."

What a room was Uncle Mark's study! What a litter on the table of odd papers, mixed up with fish-hooks and button-hooks, whistles and whip-cord! what guns glittered in the rack! what fishing-rods tapered off in trim rows against the walls! whilst leaning against a chair were two dark canvas cases, which Uncle Mark takes in his hand as he enters the room.

"My boys, if you will not have books to-day, I must give you each a rod," he says; and in a few moments George and Harry, profuse in their thanks, are extracting each a neat fishing-rod from its case.

"We used to fish with a bit of willow last year, and very good shift we made, didn't we?" goes on Uncle Mark. "I recollect Hal managed to land a fine minnow all by himself, without a net; and you, George, were said to have actually played a roach. After such feats I think you deserve to be promoted to something a little more workmanlike. Not, mind you, that I am one to despise a good willow switch, or to

be ungrateful for many a quiet evening's sport in my boyhood, with that primitive implement as my only rod.



"And many a poor fellow have I seen on the banks of the Serpentine in London, it may be, or on the quays of some foreign town, following with delight old Izaak Walton's gentle

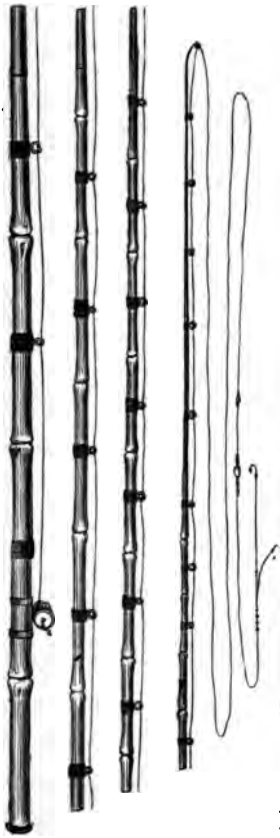
craft, equipped with every species of tool, from the trim many-jointed rod, made, no doubt, by a crack maker, to a hazel pole; and even one old soldier, I recollect, who had left a leg in the trenches before Sebastopol, used to make the best use he could of the wooden substitute, and hang his bait-can or his fish-basket on that, whilst his hands were free to manage his tackle. You will see the genial sanguine old fellow sitting there over the conduit to the right of the sketch I have made of the place, looking as though he would have the very first salmon that may venture up such a stream, or failing that, be content with anything he can get, down to the veriest minnow; and I only hope that you and I, boys, will try and take life much as that ready-shifted old soldier takes his sport, and, when wecan't have Dr. Birchem's rod, put up with those of sour old Uncle Mark as best we may."

George and Harry were exceedingly elated at the acquisition of their new rods, and, as boys will, were anxious at once to test their capabilities in the pond.

Uncle Mark accordingly sent Harry to look up Jem, the gardener's boy, who would know right well how to find the choicest worms wherewith to tempt the fish, whilst George went on an errand to the kitchen, to beg some paste of the cook.

"We shall find roach in the big pond," says Uncle Mark, "and tench and carp, no doubt; but it is not the best time of the day to fish for them. However, you are anxious, I see, to try your new rods, so come along; you will be very likely to enjoy for some time the prospect of a motionless float, but you will then learn to acquire patience, that most valuable of all an angler's equipments, and who knows but towards evening, when the fish begin to feel it is supper-time, you may have a bite?"

"You see, boys," he proceeded, as they were taking their way over the pastures towards the big pond—"you see, boys, the rods I have given you are made of bamboo, and look very smart, and neatly got up, no doubt, and will certainly do very well for the ordinary angling which you will have in the pond; but you must not sup-



pose that they are exactly suited for every sort of fishing.

"I daresay you saw in my room just now several rods carefully placed against the wall in rows. Now I have those several rods not from any strange whim or fancy, according to which I might prefer one day to fish with a light rod, another with a stout one.

"There is one great big fellow there, which is called a double-handed fly-rod, because, when fishing the wide streams for salmon, I sometimes have to use a long strong line, and require both hands to enable me to throw my fly sufficiently far, and a

strong rod to support the line; moreover, very big fish require, of course, a stouter line, and consequently a stouter rod.

"Then, too, there is a lighter fly-fishing rod for trout, and a trolling rod—that is the one with the thick top joint, and a ring turned at right angles at the point, so that the running line may have less chance of catching, a casualty which would very materially interfere with successful trolling.

"Your rods are serviceable for any ordinary fishing, as I said before, and when you become more experienced than even the capture of that minnow proves you to be, perhaps I shall some day lend you one of another sort, or perhaps by the way you will make one for yourselves, an operation which it is exceedingly useful to be able to accomplish; for you may very likely, one of these days, find yourselves in good fishing quarters without your rod, or may even have the misfortune to break one.

"I have known a very fair rod manufactured by a friend thus made destitute, and I will

tell you how he managed it, in case a like fate should overtake you. He first got a good straight hazel sapling for his bottom joint; he then selected a tough fir, entirely free from knots, for his second joint; and for the top joint he secured some lancewood, which he tipped with some five or six inches of whalebone.

"The rod answered its purpose fairly well for bottom-fishing, and I dare say exceeded the capacity of the willow switches we used to affect last year; but, as a rule, I am not inclined to counsel the adoption of these amateur-made instruments in preference to those purchased in a good shop, unless means are not at hand to indulge in such an outlay; for we may generally be sure that the constant practice of a professed maker of any article gives a proficiency in manufacture, and a skill in the selection of materials, which, provided he be honest, must go far to produce a better work than that of the amateur.

"I would mention, by the way, that Izaak Walton, of whom you both have, no doubt, at least heard something, advises that the top

joint should be painted, in order to preserve it, and prevent the wet soaking into it, which, he justly remarks, makes it heavy and to 'fish ill-favouredly.'

"We never, however, see top joints painted now-a-days, but, if no varnish be at hand, it is a hint perhaps worth remembering, should you be reduced to the making of your own top. He adds, by the way, a little maxim, which each of you may lay to heart—'I think,' he says, 'a good top is worth preserving, or I had not taken care to keep a top above twenty years.' He is quite right, you may be sure, and I hope that twenty years hence you may have found these tops which we are about to inaugurate to have been worth preserving too."



CHAPTER II.

Who hunts, doth oft in danger ride;
Who hawks, lures oft both far and wide;
Who uses games shall often prove
A loser; but who falls in love,
Is fettered in fond Cupid's snare;
My Angle breeds me no such care.

Of recreation there is none
So free as Fishing is alone;
All other pastimes do no less
Than mind and body doth possess;
My hand alone my work can do,
So I can fish and study too.

WILLIAM BASSE.

THEY had now arrived at the pond, a large still piece of water, some three or four acres in extent, lying still and sleepy in the summer-time, its surface only broken by occasional rings, as some fish rose dreamily to the surface, or when a bright blue kingfisher dipped hastily on its prey in the midst of its rapid flight.

"Look, uncle!" exclaimed Harry, as he saw one of these birds for the first time.

"Look, uncle, how lovely! surely it is a humming-bird, is it not? like those you have stuffed in the case at the hall!"



KINGFISHERS.

"No, Harry," replies Uncle Mark, "it is not a humming-bird; but I am not surprised that you should see a resemblance. It is a kingfisher, the brightest plumaged of all our English birds; indeed I think I may say it is the only British bird that has such a coat as a dandy bird of the

tropics would condescend to consider a decent plumage. Your aunt's parrot, who I suspect regards our pheasants, woodcocks, and red-legged partridges with complacent contempt, would, I have no doubt, feel some pang of jealousy at the sight of a kingfisher."

"And do you think, uncle," asks George, "that when he dips in the water, as we saw him do just now, he is trying to catch a fish?"

"He not only tries, George, but very often succeeds, for he is a capital fisherman, and for aught we know, may from some unseen perch regard the fishing of certain young gentlemen this morning with some amusement."

"And does the kingfisher stay here constantly, uncle?" asks Harry, "or he is here only to-day?"

"No, Harry, I see them constantly about; indeed I had hoped that they would have built here this spring, but I have seen no symptoms of a brood."

"But did you not look for the nest?"

"That is not always easy to find, my boy, for a kingfisher, instead of being content to build his house in a tree, like most other birds, must needs

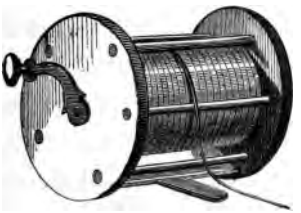
place it in some retired hole out of sight. I am told it is not easy to find a kingfisher's nest, and indeed I, for my part, have no desire to do so again, though I did once have the hardiness to unearth one, and it proved to be rather a curious sight.

"I used to watch one of the birds pretty frequently, and observed that he or she very constantly sought one particular part of a pond; this narrowed the sphere of my observation, and I at length discovered that a particular hole in the bank was much affected as a resort. I then took a spade, and having followed the hole some two feet or so into the ground, I found a sort of flat open nest, composed entirely of fish-bones, on which were laid eleven small white eggs. I was not further rewarded for my search, for the eggs turned out to be all 'hard sat on,' and therefore valueless for my collection; whilst, though I left some eggs on the nest to entice it to go on sitting, the poor bird, alarmed, I suppose, by the disturbed look of its abode, never, I think, had heart to return to it.

"I may tell you privately that I think I

ought to have been birched for my curiosity; but, though I escaped that form of correction, I have not repeated my experiment, nor do I wish to do so; for why should one break up the poor fellow's home, when its undisturbed enjoyment may eventually give us the prospect of many such beautifully plumaged birds?

"And now, boys, take your rods out of their cases and let us put them together.



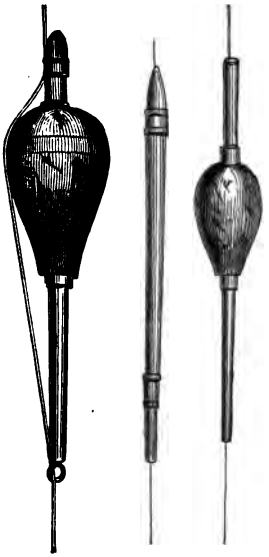
"You see I have added a reel to your outfit, in order that you may be thoroughly equipped. I don't think it is very likely you will have any need for it in the pond here, but it is an instrument that I think every angler should have, for who knows what monster of the deep may not take a fancy to your bait; and, should such a contingency happen, it is as well to have plenty of line all ready to run freely, so that the fish may not, by a sudden dash, snap your line. Again, it is not always

easy to know what length of line may be actually required—whether a long one to reach over a bunch of weeds, or a short one, so as to drop your bait neatly into any particular spot which you may fancy.

"With regard to your line itself, I am not going to trouble you with minute instructions as to its manufacture at present, for I believe the remark I made just now as to the advisability of purchasing your rod when possible, instead of making it yourself, holds good with regard to lines also, and that those who have made it the practice and business of their lives to fabricate them, can supply us with a far better article than we can make ourselves. You have here a good silk line with a gut end to it, which will answer your purpose very well.

"Nor shall I waste much time in talking to you about your float. I am quite aware that some people are most particular about the quality, size, and appearance of their float, and indeed will spend much time, thought, and money in anxious search for the particular object of their fancy; thus one man is not satisfied

with a plain porcupine quill, but must needs seek out that of a bustard, whilst another is fastidious as to its being a goose quill.



"For my own part, though of course the float must vary in size, according to whether or not it is necessary to use much lead to sink the line—as, for instance, in fishing very deep in the water—and though some difference may also, perhaps, be allowed for very windy weather, when a large float may also be desirable—for my own part, I say, I do not think you boys need waste any of your precious time in either seeking for floats of extraordinary properties or in discussing their merits, but may be content with either a plain quill, or one of painted cork, either of which, in such a pond as this, will sufficiently indicate to

you such operations of the fish as need concern you.

"We must remember, moreover, that that historical minnow of Harry's was brought to shore after his bite had been detected by no better indicator than an ordinary wine-bottle cork; and though, perhaps, such a primitive instrument may not very accurately demonstrate the most timid nibblings of the fish, still, in the absence of these magnificent affairs of which we are now masters, I believe some sport might be had even with a wine cork."

During this discourse of Uncle Mark, both he and his nephews had been busy putting together their rods, and adjusting the reels and lines thereto.

Presently George, who had been walking round the pond, came running up to the other two with the information that some large fish were just to be seen swimming about a few yards from the bank.

Uncle Mark went with him to the spot and pronounced the fish to be carp.

"Then by all means, uncle, let us at once try

and catch some," exclaimed George, eager to make proof of his new fishing tackle.

"Ah! George," replies Uncle Mark, "you may well say 'try and catch' them, but carps are not the easiest fish in the world to be tempted on to the hook. Old Izaak Walton tells us that 'his first direction, if you will fish for a carp, is to put on a very large measure of patience; especially to fish for a river carp.' 'I have known,' he says, 'a very good fisher angle diligently four or six hours in a day, for three or four days together, for a river carp, and not have a bite. And,' he adds, 'you are to note, that in some ponds it is as hard to catch a carp as in a river—that is to say, where they have store of feed, and the water is of a clayish colour.'

"Moreover, the same good old angler particularly points out that if you fish for carp in warm weather—and in cold weather he will seldom bite—you cannot be too early or too late at it. Nevertheless, George, if you have a fancy to land one of those lazy-looking fellows, and are also prepared to put on a large measure of patience, let us get to work at it,

even though we are not on this occasion either early or late.

"Or suppose, George, we try another plan! It is always well, in fishing for carp, which is an exceedingly shy fish, to let him have plenty of ground bait whereon to feed.

"Now suppose we throw in to these fellows a quantity of gentles or pellets of paste, so that they may gradually acquire such a boldness of gluttony as may induce them to take your bait more fearlessly this evening. It is early yet for blackberries, otherwise I believe they are said to be fond of them, but as a substitute, I think if we take some paste, and colour it with a little vermilion or other red matter, we shall have prepared such a dainty as will be irresistible.

"But I must tell you that carp are somewhat dainty and capricious in their tastes. For instance, there is a certain *bonne bouche* which I used to prepare for them, composed of crumbs of new bread and honey, or sugar well mixed and rubbed together with the hand, which they used to greedily devour one day,

whilst the next they would utterly disregard it with all the dainty fastidiousness of an invalid epicure.

"By the way, I believe some people like to have paste baits always at hand, and indeed as it does, perhaps, save some trouble, I will give you a recipe for making it, whilst we are preparing our ground bait, which may probably be useful to you. I have taken it from our friend Walton again, who says, 'if you would have this paste keep all the year for any other fish, then mix with it virgin-wax and clarified honey, and work them together with your hands before the fire, then make these into balls, and they will keep all the year.'

"There is one little hint I may give you, which is to have your hooks whipped with white silk when fishing with a paste bait, for otherwise there will be such a startling contrast between the black hook and the white paste, as must readily suggest to any fish of the most ordinary intellect that something is amiss.

"In fishing, however, for carp, this suggestion is not of so much importance, as I propose that our

paste should be coloured with vermilion. And I may here take opportunity to remark that, as we propose to use such a paste for our bait, it is as well, if not indeed quite necessary, to make use of the same for our ground bait, in order that, as I just remarked, the fish, being drawn to one spot, and having partaken freely of that particular food, may have no compunctions about taking also the hooked morsel, which, by the way, we should endeavour so to serve up to their notice that it may look even more delicious than the courses in which they have already indulged.

"I could tell you a good deal about ground bait had we time, but it is sufficient at present that you should understand the principle of it—your own discrimination and observation will, I am sure, enable you to find out for yourselves by degrees what particular varieties are suitable for different fish and localities; for you must not, of course, suppose that such as will lie complacently at the bottom of a still pond will retain its position in the bed of a stream. In such cases your ground bait must be composed

of some heavier substances, according to the force of the current. I have known clay mixed up with bran into balls, about the size of a pigeon's egg, for such cases; and it may even be a good plan, should the stream be very swift, to put a stone in the centre of the ball.

"The great object, of course, is to attract fish to one spot, and to make them bite fearlessly; they will very soon find out where they are well off, and even should they stray from the spot in accordance with their roaming disposition, are not likely to stay long away from really attractive quarters.

"Now observe, boys, where I throw these pellets of paste, and to-morrow morning, or it may be this evening, though I am rather in favour of feeding a good time before fishing myself, we will try whether we cannot induce some epicure to taste of our hooked bait.

"You see I am only allowing them to-day just sufficient to coax without sating their appetite, lest, when we come to the graver business of angling, we shall find our friends in such a state of comfortable repletion as will

make them regard our bait only with cynical composure, just indeed as you would, no doubt, regard good Dr. Birchem's puddings, were he to allow you previously to devour meat to satiety."

"Does a carp grow to be a very big fish, uncle?" asks Harry.

"Walton tells us, my boy, that the carp, if he have water-room and good feed, will grow to a very great bigness and length—'I have heard,' he says, 'to be much above a yard long.' I confess, for my part, I haven't, but what prodigies may have existed in Walton's time I don't know.

"A carp is not naturally an English fish, but was brought over in the early part of the sixteenth century by one Mr. Maschal, a Sussex gentleman, which county, Walton tells us, abounds more with this fish than any in this nation! Did you ever hear these lines?—

'Hops and turkeys, carps and beer,
Came into England all in a year.'

"According to Sir Francis Bacon, the carp lives about ten years, and therefore, if he ever

acquires the astonishing proportions mentioned on hearsay by Izaak Walton, he must be what we should call a very quick-growing lad.



"That frog, by the way, sitting under the bank there, reminds me that, according to Walton again, the carp is liable to be cut

short in his career in a very extraordinary manner.

"'Their decoys,' he writes, 'are very mysterious: I have both read it, and been told by a gentleman of tried honesty, that he has known sixty or more large carps put into several ponds near to a house, where, by reason of the stakes in the pond, and the owner's constantly being near to them, it was impossible they should be stolen away from him, and that when he has, after three or four years, emptied the pond, he has found neither a young nor old carp remaining. And the like I have known of one that has almost watched the pond, and at a like distance of time, at the fishing of a pond, found of seventy or eighty large carps not above five or six; and that he had forborne longer to fish the said pond, but that he saw in a hot day in summer, a large carp swim near the top of the water with a frog upon his head, and that he, upon that occasion, caused his pond to be let dry; and, I say, of seventy or eighty carps, only found five or six in the said pond, and those very sick and lean, and with every one a frog sticking

so fast on the head of the said carps, that the frog would not be got off without extreme force or killing; and the gentleman that did affirm this to me, told me he saw it, and did declare his belief to be—and I also believe the same—that he thought the other carps that were so strangely lost, were so killed by frogs, and then devoured.'"

George and Harry both laughed so immoderately at this somewhat quaint account of fishing frogs, that Uncle Mark was induced to add yet another tale of a like nature, for which, as he told them, he was also indebted to the same author, who, quoting one Dubravius, a bishop of Bohemia, writes that "as he (Dubravius) and the bishop (Thurzo) were walking by a large pond in Bohemia, they saw a frog, when the pike lay very sleepily and quiet by the shore side, leap upon his head; and the frog having expressed malice or anger by his swollen cheeks and staring eyes, did stretch out his hands and embrace the pike's head, and presently reached them to his eyes, tearing with them and his teeth those tender parts; the pike, moved with anguish,

moves up and down the water, and rubs himself against weeds, and whatever he thought might quit him of his enemy; but all in vain, for the frog did continue to ride triumphantly, and to bite and torment the pike, till his strength failed, and then the frog sunk with the pike to the bottom of the water; then presently the frog appeared again at the top and croaked, and seemed to rejoice like a conqueror, after which he presently retired to his secret hole. The bishop, that had beheld the battle, called his fisherman to fetch his nets, and by all means to get the pike, that they might declare what had happened; and the pike was drawn forth, and both his eyes eaten out; at which, when they began to wonder, the fisherman wished them to forbear, and assured them he was certain that pikes were often so served."

"That is somewhat of a horrible, not to say remarkable tale, is it not, George? however, our province is just now, perhaps, not so much to enquire what creatures eat fishes as what fishes eat! for we may be certain that, having discovered that, and having brought them thereby

to table, plenty of opportunity will be afforded us of noting that they are eaten.

"Let us see, then, what good Izaak tells us of the bait to be used for carp!

"'The carp bites,' he says, 'either at worms or at paste; and of worms I think the bluish marsh or meadow-worm is best; but possibly another worm, not too big, may do as well, and so may a green gentle; and as for pastes, there are almost as many sorts as there are medicines for the toothache, but doubtless sweet pastes are best—I mean pastes made with honey or with sugar—which, that you may the better beguile this crafty fish, should be thrown into the pond or place in which you fish for him some hours or longer before you undertake your trial of skill with the angle-rod. And if you fish for a carp with gentles, then put upon your hook a small piece of scarlet, it being soaked in or anointed with oil of peter, called by some, oil of the rock.'

"Moreover, he advises, that whilst you are fishing, you should chew some white or brown bread in your mouth, and from time to time throw some about where your float is on the water.

"You may use a red worm, and I have indeed heard of a gentle being superadded on the point of the hook; or, in early summer, as now, we might very advantageously catch a grasshopper or two as a bait; or, failing that, a wasp grub, a



GRASSHOPPER.

beetle, a caterpillar, or caddis might answer our purpose.

"The season for carp-fishing lasts from about February to September, but I have not generally known them bite freely in ponds such as this till about April; in rivers, perhaps, they may bite rather earlier.

"And note this, my boys, that in fishing for a

carp you must use some discretion, and must strike according to the nature of your bait.

"If, for instance, you should be using a worm, you must not strike on the first symptoms of motion in the float, or you will probably pull the worm out of his mouth, he at first only taking a tentative suck at his food. If, on the other hand, you are using paste, you must exercise a nice judgment in striking at as early a moment as possible, for otherwise the carp will suck away the paste without being hooked.

"There is this advantage, however, in hooking a carp, that, being what Walton calls a 'leather-mouthed' fish, which property he describes as having the teeth in the throat, the hook once stuck in the skin or leather of the mouth is seldom or never removed.

"I recollect a curious incident in the ways of carp, mentioned by Mr. White in his *Natural History of Selborne*, a book, by the way, which would probably interest both of you very much. He notes in a letter to a friend, that under a certain inn at Reading flows a stream in which carp are found; and that travellers are in the

habit in the summer months of feeding the carp, but that in the winter the fish retire under the arch that supports the inn over the water. What their purpose may be I cannot imagine; whether, their appetites being slighter, they are not to be tempted into the publicity of Reading, or whether, exhausted with the giddy delights of the summer season, they desire to seek repose, and repair their complexions in quiet retirement. And, talking of the complexions of carp, I have hitherto forgotten to mention that they will live to a great age; Buffon tells us they will live a hundred and fifty years, and I believe they are said to be known to have lived longer still; and it has been remarked, of some that were placed in the ponds at Versailles in the time of Louis the Fourteenth, that they had grown white with age. So that you see even fish may look regretfully on their fading charms, and sigh over the blanching of their golden fins, just as the ladies of our branch of the creation deplore the grizzling of their auburn locks, or we old fogies, for that matter, the increasing white hairs in our once beautiful whiskers.

"And now, boys, as we have sprinkled sufficient ground-bait, and as I have meanwhile given you some instructions as to the history of the carp and the way to catch him, I shall expect you to bring home a full basket of fish to your aunt this evening; but before we leave the scene of our to-night's or to-morrow's fishing, I would suggest that we plumb the spot with this piece of lead, in order that we may know what depth of water we shall have to fish in beforehand, and thus save the disturbance which would be occasioned by such a proceeding when it becomes necessary to adjust our floats on the line.

"And, if you will remind me before you make your attempt on the credulity of these wily fellows, I will try and find you each a finer line, for, when I said just now that your silk lines would serve your purpose for most fish in the pond, I had forgotten that for carp it is as well to have a thin gut line, or one, at all events, very fine."

"And now, uncle, what shall we do whilst the carp are feeding on the ground-bait?" asks Harry, eager to be initiated into the mysteries

of the sport, and to test the qualities of his new gear.

"Well, Harry," replies Uncle Mark, "there are tench and roach in this pond, besides carp, and for that matter there are also pike, and, I believe, bream; but for these last I think we will not try till about four o'clock in the afternoon.

"I do not think it is quite the best time of day to be fishing for anything, but I quite feel that something must be done with those new rods, and as this is at least a good time of year for tench, who do not bite very greedily, I fancy, but in the warmer months, I propose to bait our hook with some paste made of brown bread and honey, which I think is likely to attract either tench or roach. I am not sure that the latter, however, have a sweet tooth, and so they may give themselves airs, and turn up their noses at the honey, but I think it will tempt the tench, and failing that, we can put on a green gentle, or a flagworm, or a lobworm, or even, I think, any worm.

"What if we vary the entertainment we are preparing for him, and set some nice paste made

of brown bread and mixed with honey, or with tar—which, oddly enough, is rather a weakness of his—on Harry's hook, whilst a good lob-worm shall be on George's, at the other end of the table, so to speak.

"I had thought we might arrange that Harry should fish for roach whilst George essayed the capture of a tench, but, as I think it is as well that I should be near to both of you, and as I think roach do not affect the same depth as tench, perhaps it will be best for both of you to try for the same sort of fish in the deep hole which lies under the clump of alders yonder.

"I happen to know the depth, and that the bottom there is of soft mud, which is considered by tench, I notice, an advantageous retreat; and, knowing this, it will not be necessary for you to plumb in order to discover what is the nature of the bottom, a proceeding which I should commend to your adoption as a rule, for otherwise your worm may lie comfortably hidden in the mud at one end of the line, whilst you give point to that satire, 'a worm at

one end and a fool at the other,' waiting in anxious, patient ignorance for that bite which will never come.

"Here is the hole, and now let us bait our hooks, and adjust our float according to the depth.

"What! your float lies flat on the water, or, as we say, does not 'cock,' George. You must shorten the length between it and the hook. That is it!

"Now be patient both of you, and watch your float whilst I go up to the farm yonder for half-an-hour."



CHAPTER III.

Let me live harmlessly, and near the brink
 Of Trent or Avon have a dwelling-place;
Where I may see my quill or cork down sink
 With eager bite of perch, or bleak, or dace;
And on the world and my Creator think:
 Whilst some men strive ill-gotten goods t' embrace;
 And others spend their time in base excess
 Of wine, or worse, in war and wantonness.

DAVORS.

THE two boys held their rods patiently in their hands for some time without any symptoms of a fish nibbling at their bait, and they were beginning to think that perhaps they were at fault in having selected midday for their fishing instead of waiting till the evening, when Uncle Mark was seen again coming to the pond.

"What! no fish landed yet?" he exclaims; "that is unfortunate; but let us see whether we

cannot find out some method whereby they may be tempted to dine.

"You see tench are rather solemn, absent-minded fellows, and are apt, I suspect, to forget the dinner-hour, unless it is brought to their especial notice. Now, as they may be lying all round either George's worm or Harry's paste without noticing what an opportunity for refection is theirs, suppose each of you raise and lower your rod gently, so that the moving object on your hooks may arouse their attention and excite their curiosity. That is it! very slowly and gently, Harry; if you do it so fast as that, so active a pudding may be regarded by them as nothing short of a monster, and may scare them in panic from their haunt.

"And now, whilst your patience dances attendance on the appetite of the fish, let me relieve the monotony of the moment by quoting you some lines, by one Chalkhill, which you will find in the pages of that cheery fellow, Izaak Walton, and which may serve to enhance your appreciation of the sport you have presently adopted :--

"Oh! the gallant fisher's life,
It is the best of any;
'Tis full of pleasure, void of strife,
And 'tis beloved by many.
Other joys
Are but toys,
Only this
Lawful is,
For our skill
Breeds no ill,
But content and pleasure.

"In a morning up we rise,
Ere Aurora's peeping;
Drink a cup to wash our eyes,
Leave the sluggard sleeping:
Then we go
To and fro,
With our knacks
On our backs,
To such streams
As the Thames,
If we have the leisure.

"When we please to walk abroad
For our recreation,
In the fields is our abode,
Full of delectation:
Where in a brook,
With a hook,

Or a lake,
Fish we take;
There we sit,
For a bit,
Till we fish entangle.

"We have gentles in a horn,
We have paste and worms too;
We can watch both night and morn,
Suffer rain and storms too.
None do here
Use to swear;
Oaths do fray
Fish away;
We sit still,
And watch our quill;
Fishers must not wrangle.

"If the sun's excessive heat
Make our bodies swelter,
To an osier-hedge we get
For a friendly shelter;
Where in a dyke
Perch or pike,
Roach or dace,
We do chase,
Bleak or gudgeon
Without grudging;
We are still contented.

"Or we sometimes pass an hour
Under a green willow;
That defends us from a shower,
Making earth our pillow;
Where we may
Think and pray,
Before death
Stops our breath;
Other joys
Are but toys,
And to be lamented."

"Ah! George, you have a bite. Patience now, my boy; do not strike at once, or the worm will glide innocuously from his mouth, much as I told you it would from that of the carp; for your tench is a most contemplative fellow, constantly retiring to some out-of-the-way corner, as though deep in the solution of some vexed problem, and in the midst of the mastication of the most delicious mouthful is apt to fall into a brown study, and suck his food instead of swallowing it in a rational and convenient way.

"Ah! your float is beginning to lie flat on the water, which shows that the fish is rising to the surface; now, therefore, you may strike.

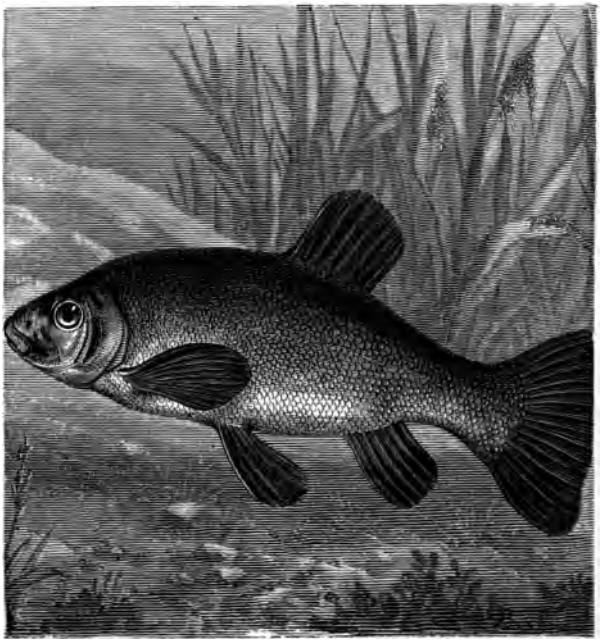
That is it. Ah! my fine fellow, you may now pursue your studies and reflections with no future interruption of the dinner-hour."

George, during Uncle Mark's last observations, had been much excited by feeling the fish twitching at his line, and when at length, with a very slight jerk or pull, he had hooked him, and drawn him to shore, his elation knew no bounds.

"That is a capital fish, George," says his uncle, "and may be, I should say, about two pounds in weight; your lob-worm is tempting this morning, you see. Let us examine the fish, so that in future you may both know one when you see it. You see he is of a blackish olive colour, but lighter on the belly, with very small scales, and with all the fins of a dusky colour and rather large. The scales are very small and smooth, and there is a red circle about the eyes.

"Walton calls him the physician of fishes, and says that there are in his head two little stones which foreign physicians make great use of; that does not much concern us, perhaps, and indeed the faculty may not make such use of them, for aught I know, now-a-days, as they did in Wal-

ton's time, which you know was during the early and middle part of the seventeenth century. What concerns us more is that he tells us that



TENCH.

this fish 'is not commended for wholesome meat.' He may not be wholesome, but I have eaten him, well broiled and peppered, with much pleasure,

and have no recollection of having suffered afterwards in consequence. He seems, according to Izaak Walton, to have been appointed physician in ordinary to the pike.

"'The pike,' he says, 'being either sick or hurt, is cured by the touch of the tench. And it is observed, that the tyrant pike will not be a wolf to his physician, but forbears to devour him, though he be never so hungry.'"

"The tyrant pike may have found that he is justly 'not commended for wholesome meat,' which may account for his forbearance," said George.

"That may be so, no doubt, but we will ourselves test the pike's judgment at breakfast to-morrow."

"I think," says Harry, "there is another physician tasting my paste."

"You are right, Harry, and, I begin to think, finds it to his liking, by the quite unusual bustle of his proceedings. You may pull him up if you like."

And so it came about that Harry also landed his fish, and before two o'clock they

had managed to capture five tench between them.

"Not a very big catch, is it, boys? but the weight of the fishes seem to me very fair. I believe tench are caught up to five pounds in weight; these are not of such dimensions as that, no doubt, but will make a respectable appearance on the table to-morrow morning, even if we succeed in catching nothing more."

"And it is so much better," says Harry, "than catching nothing."

"Or than catching minnows, eh, Harry?" replies Uncle Mark, with a laugh. "And now, suppose you fellows open that basket under the tree yonder, and let us refresh ourselves with what good things your aunt has provided in the shade, where, by the way, it is just as well you should also place your fish, until Jem arrives to carry our spoil to the larder.

"You might try for some roach, if you like, this afternoon," he said, as he was smoking his pipe after his luncheon. "And to that end it might be well to manufacture some paste, which should, as Walton says, 'be so tempered between

your hands till it be both soft and tough too; a very little water, and time and labour, and clean hands;' mark that, boys, 'will make it a most excellent paste; but when you fish with it, you must have a small hook, a quick eye, and a nimble hand, or the bait is lost and the fish too, if,' as he significantly adds, 'one may lose that which he never had.'

"In winter, he tells us, we should use paste or gentles; in April, worms or caddis; in the very hot months, little white snails, or flies under water, for he seldom takes them at the top. However, as he also commends the paste I have mentioned for August, I think we might try it now, though after all, perhaps, it would be better, as we are only in July, to take a fly.

"I ought to tell you that roach more properly belong to the river than the pond; the pond fellow being considered only a very distant cousin by a blue-blooded roach of the river.

"I am not very anxious we should try for them, because I believe the right season is from autumn to the following spring, and it is not desirable to

shoals or with company, as roach and dace and most other fish do; and bold, because he fears not a shadow, or to see or be seen of anybody, as the trout and chub and all other fish do.' Moreover, I may tell you, with regard to this boldness, that, having landed one, it is as well that your fingers should give a wide berth to his jaws, which are apt to close and give one, if not, as some have supposed, a venomous, at least a very nasty bite.

"And this reminds me, my boys, that with regard to landing fish, and indeed with regard to all the several processes of fishing, we should always be careful to avoid, as far as possible, the infliction of pain. I cannot, for my part, absolve the sport from a charge of giving pain, though I know many people are ready to advance theories to the contrary, saying that fish, being cold-blooded creatures, are comparatively insensate, and that worms, and the lower orders of creation generally, are far less sensitive to pain than we and the larger animals would be.

"I am not in a position to refute this theory positively, but I think it is impossible to be

certain as to its validity, without hearing the evidence of the fishes themselves.

"I would therefore charge you, by all means, when possible, to make use of artificial baits, which, when properly constructed, I believe to be just as killing as the live baits; and, moreover, to take care to kill your fish the instant it is landed, and not to leave it to sob out a lingering, cruel death on shore. I am told it is a capital plan to carry with your fishing gear a short loaded club, say about a foot or so long, with which you may at least immediately stun your fish by a sharp blow at the back of the head and neck.

"Whether the sport be cruel or not, it is certain that we may easily take measures to mitigate the severity of whatever pain may be inflicted, and I think you would do well, boys, this evening to read a little book which I have in my possession, written by Mr. Oliver Raymond,* a thorough good fisherman, with the

* *The Art of Fishing on the Principle of Avoiding Cruelty.* By the Rev. Oliver Raymond, LL.B. Longmans, Green, & Co.

obect of showing how cruelty may be avoided in fishing. One of his great maxims is to 'kill the bait' before using it, and to kill the fish when landed. 'Kill the bait before you use it,' he writes. '"Yes—but ah!" says one, "there is nothing like a live bait." This I deny, and would not fear, were I in the habit of betting, to risk a considerable sum of money that I would with a snap hook, properly baited with a *dead* gudgeon, we will say, or any other small fish, equal, if not surpass the success of the merciless angler who impales when alive the poor defenceless little bait, and keeps him writhing on the hook, to entice the ravenous pike; or passes a wire down his back, and thus spits him alive, that he may live the longer on his hook.'

"I might add that, in using artificial fish-bait, it is well to rub them with a dead fish, and also, in fishing with dead worms, to dip them in oil of aniseed, in order that the fish may smell as well as see their bait; and you may note that worms may be killed best by taking them in the palm of the hand and dashing them to the ground.



CHAPTER IV.

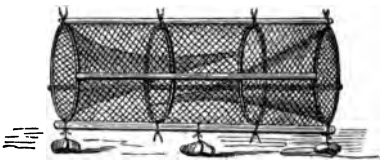
The tench, physician of the brook,
In yon dead hole expects your hook,
Which having first your pastime been,
Serves then for meat or medicine.
Ambushed behind that root doth stay
A pike, to catch and be a prey;
The treacherous quill in this slow stream
Betrays the hunger of a bream;
And at that nimbler ford, no doubt,
Your false fly cheats a speckled trout.

THOS. WEAVER.

"TALKING of artificial bait reminds me," said Uncle Mark, "that there is a plan of fishing without using a hook at all. I allude, of course, to fishing by net, and as it is yet early in the afternoon, I think it would not be amiss to get my nets out of the boat-house yonder, and set some before we renew our operations with the rod and line."

The boat-house referred to was such a model of neatness as would remind one of the trim-kept cabin of a man-of-war. There was first, lying in dock as it were, a flat-bottomed boat, called a punt, which, as he told the boys, was very useful for fishing from, because it was less liable to roll than a boat; then there was a trim varnished wherry lying beside the punt, whilst in a sort of inner chamber or cabin were ranged in neat rows oars and boat-hooks, fishing nets, and other aquatic and sporting paraphernalia. Everything had its allotted place, and was thus kept in good order and ready to hand when wanted.

There were various sorts of nets, and among them one which Uncle Mark called a thief-net.



It was a round net some four feet long, by about two broad, stretched over hoops, which were painted a dull green. Two nets, shaped like a funnel, made a passage at either end into

the interior of the net, whilst to one of the bars which kept the hooks in position were attached some large stones, wherewith to keep the apparatus under water.

Uncle Mark gathered a handful of brilliant flowers, which he tied together, and suspended them inside the net from the upper rod, in such a manner that, when in the water, they would hang in the centre of the net; and, lest the nosegay should float, he fastened to the lower part a pebble, just sufficiently large to keep it down.

He then placed this net in the water at the margin of the pond, selecting a place of just such a depth as would cover the net by a few inches.

"There, my boys," he said, when he had completed his preparations, "that, you will find, will in all probability make a most attractive bower for tench or carp, or even for eels, and you see it is just one of those places which, though tolerably easy of entrance, are exceedingly difficult of exit. And I should not wonder if by to-morrow morning we found some fish, whose

curiosity has exceeded his discretion, swimming about in the full but costly enjoyment of our bouquet.

"I might add, by the way, that there is another way, and a very curious one, of attracting fish into these nets; and that is, by placing therein a fish taken from some other waters. This is said to be a most taking lure—why, I cannot quite say, unless it be that curiosity is as inherent in the fish as in the human and other animal species. I daresay you have observed how horses, loose in a pasture, will gather round any fresh horse that may appear on the scene; and certainly the spectacle of boys at school drawing round a new boy must be familiar to you. Perhaps fish have a like instinct with regard to a fresh arrival; but, however it be, they are undoubtedly induced by his presence to enter the net, I believe."

"Look, uncle," here exclaimed George, who had been stirring the mud in an adjacent puddle, "I have found a lizard."

"I see, George," exclaimed his uncle—"quite

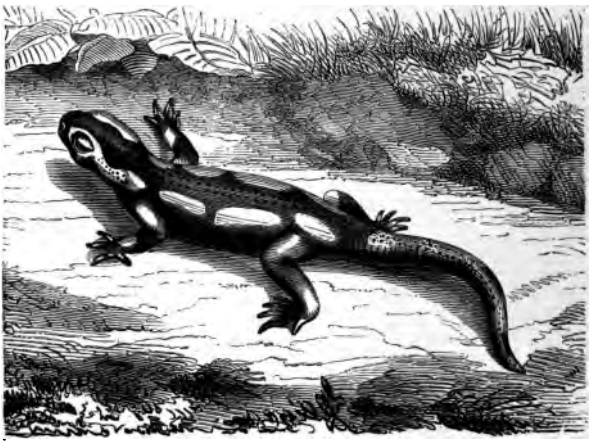
an aquatic monster, is it not? but to be more precise, you should call it an 'eft,' or 'newt.' I have heard it said that some people use these



funny little fellows for bait, in such cases where a frog might be used, and that more particularly in ponds. But I think it is exceedingly doubtful whether they are to the taste of any fish, and I have never actually used them for that purpose myself, partly because I prefer to make use of a more seductive lure, and partly from a desire never to use a live bait if I can help it."

"And do these newts live in the water, uncle?" asks Harry.

"They are rather indifferent, Harry, I believe, whether they live in water or on shore. Earth, air, and water, three of the elements, they make use of. There is indeed one sort of lizard, called

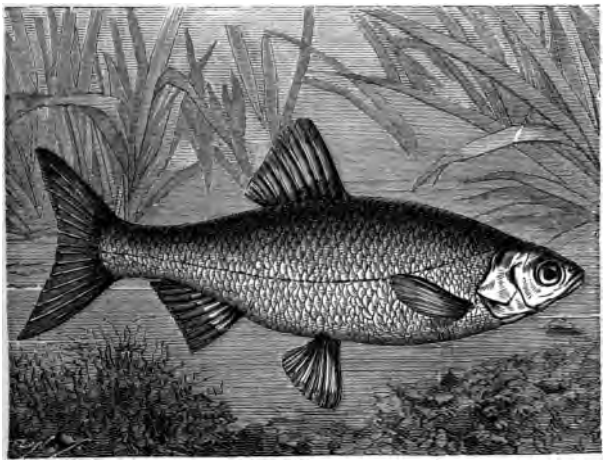


a salamander, which is not, however, to be found in England, which is said to affect fire also, but between ourselves I think we may take it that the tale is without foundation."

"Do you know, uncle, that it is four o'clock, and that we should therefore be getting ready

our rods to fish for bream, as you promised?" said George.

"Quite true, George, though I could have wished that for this sport we had copiously spread ground bait also; it is a good time of the



BREAM.

afternoon no doubt, but I fear we shall not have much chance of catching many without having previously cast ground bait. I think it would be a good plan to cast plenty of it in now, and then to-morrow morning, as you and Harry are early

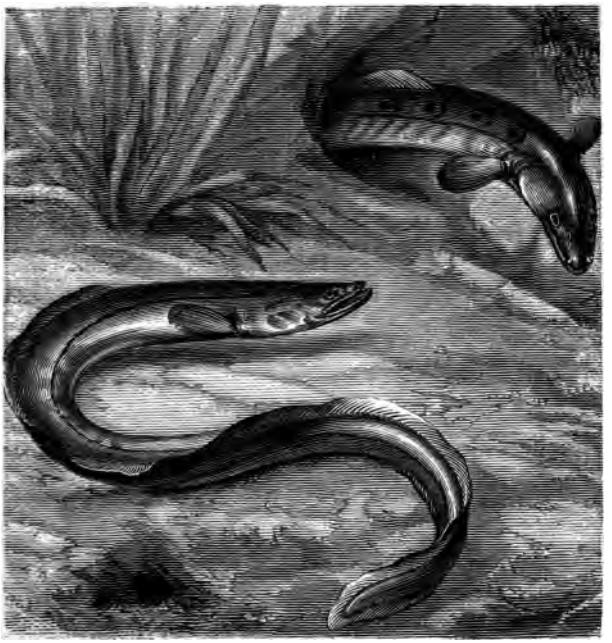
risers, you can come here about four o'clock, and try your chance with a bait either of red-worms, gentles, or paste made of bread and honey, or you might try your luck, failing to be up at that hour, about four o'clock to-morrow afternoon. Walton says—'About four o'clock in the afternoon repair to your baited place, and as soon as you come to the water-side, cast in one-half of the rest of your ground bait, and stand off; then whilst the fish are gathering together, for there they most certainly will come for their supper, you may take a pipe of tobacco, and then in with your three rods.'

"*You* may neither take your pipe of tobacco nor your three rods, however; for all sporting purposes I hold one rod to be sufficient; if a man is fishing for his living, of course it is another matter.

"And now, boys, I propose to bring this somewhat various day's sport to a termination, by preparing some night-lines for eels; we shall then have the pond set with so many engines of destruction for to-morrow, as will make it highly necessary for almost every fish in the place to be

exceedingly careful how and what he eats, if he would not fall victim to our cunning.

"We shall, first of all, take a good long piece



of whipcord, which we will fasten to this tree at one end, and at the other to that stump on the other side of the pond, and on to the whipcord at

intervals of two feet or so we will fasten lengths of gut or silk, and bait the hook at the end with lob-worms, or with chicken guts, or raw beef, for the eel is not particular, and in the morning I have little doubt but what we shall find some of these slippery customers have paid court to the fare which we have provided for them. But if you wish to secure your prize, you should properly be up very early in the morning, or you may not unlikely find that the best eels have managed to get off the hooks."

"Do you find eels, uncle, only in a pond?" asked Harry.

"Oh dear, no, in rivers also; more particularly in the muddy banks, however, wherein some suppose they bury themselves during the winter months.

"But there is something very curious in the customs of the eel, as compared with those of other fishes.

"It is a very remarkable fact, that if we were to dig a pond in these fields to-day, putting in no fish whatever, we should, nevertheless, in all

probability be able in a year's time to find eels in it.

"But how do they come there, uncle?" asks George.

"Ah!" replies Uncle Mark, "that is a question about which many have differed. There used to be a theory that they were produced by the mud, but I believe the real and more simple fact is that they travel from one pond to another.

"Without doubt they are capable of surviving for some time out of water, and have certainly been observed taking the air in meadows; indeed I have known of one being met in a small plantation which bordered a large pond.

"It is said, I believe, that an eel may be kept in a cool place many days out of water, and the fact is accounted for by the peculiar formation of its gills, which, from having a long passage from the gill chamber outwards, are not liable to get dry so quickly as in other fish.

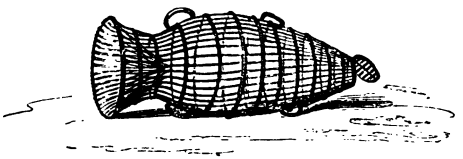
"In the spring, countless numbers of young eels come up the rivers, and again in cold weather, to which our eel is not partial, descend to the estuaries, where, I presume, they bury

themselves in the mud, or find a temperature more equal and suited to their taste in the brackish water.

"The mode of transit of the young eels up the rivers is very curious. Moving along at the rate of several miles an hour, they keep close under the bank, and, having a great dislike to that part of the water where the stream is strongest, take advantage of every comparatively still water that lies behind stones and other obstructions. The little fellows are hardly an inch long when they commence their great journey, and it might be matter of wonder how things so small could maintain such a pace for the distance they travel. I believe, however, that it may be accounted for in the same way as is the long flight of birds of passage. Naturalists have observed that in such birds there is a certain period in the year when the motion of their wings becomes involuntary. The nightingale, for instance, is said to beat the bars of his cage in captivity, a proceeding which has given rise to very pretty notions about its sensitive spirit, but which is more

prosaically believed to be due to the natural flapping of the wings at the period I have mentioned. Now you may observe, boys, that what I call involuntary motion is not fatiguing in the same way as other exercise. Day and night we continue breathing, for instance, without being conscious of any strain on our powers of endurance. And so it may be that these little eels have a period of involuntary transition, just as nightingales and other birds of passage.

"It is during their passage up and down the rivers that the fisherman is able to make great catches of eels. To do this he fixes weirs or stages across the stream, with baskets, or *bucks*,



as they are called, fixed in them. These baskets are of a large size, and shaped much like that large Chinese jar under the black cabinet in the hall.

"In the mouth of these baskets is fitted a sort of funnel-shaped entrance, composed of withy rods sloping inwards to a point. Through this point the eels can very easily force themselves, and thus obtain the *entrée;* but when they wish to get out again, lo! the exit is closed, and only one departure is allowed them, namely, that through that little lid, which the fisherman opens, and which leads only to the stew-pan or other implements of the cook.

"And now, boys, I think as the heat of the day has abated, and as you have had little or no exercise, you may go and take a walk with the keeper and the dogs, or have a scamper on the ponies, and to-morrow we will see what fruit our preparations have borne."

CHAPTER V.

To hear the lark begin his flight,
And, singing, startle the dull night,
From his watch-tower in the skies,
Till the dappled dawn doth rise;
Then to come, in spite of sorrow,
And at my window bid good-morrow,
Through the sweet-briar, or the vine,
Or the twisted eglantine.

MILTON.

GEORGE and Harry were up very early the next morning, and having let themselves out of the house, were very soon over the dewy pastures, and standing at the margin of the pond.

What a morning it was! and how beautiful everything looked, lying in the early mist, undisturbed as yet by any of the business of the day! A moorhen was standing beneath the bank apparently heedless of danger, and unconscious

of the presence of the two boys, though she was soon scudding lightly over the still surface of the pond, when Harry's voice had warned her of



their propinquity ; whilst on the opposite shore a brown water-rat was performing his morning toilet, seated on the root of a tree which projected over his roomy tub.

Farther inland, by some yard or so, a large frog was croaking, squatting the while composedly on the sandy coast, as though waiting till the sun should be up before he should be tempted to take his morning plunge.

The dumb creation had had the world to themselves for some hours, and was lingering yet in its enjoyment before it should again be given up to the empire of man.

"That fellow reminds me of Uncle Mark's story," says George, looking at the frog. "I



wonder if he is on the look-out for a pike or a carp?"

"Talking of carp," replies Harry, "this is just the spot which we fed with ground bait, and I can just make out a couple of big fellows swim-

ming about down below there now. Look, George, do you see them?"

"Yes," said George, "and I think we should do well to throw in a little more of that paste which we made so carefully yesterday, just to keep them alive to the fact that this is a likely spot to find their grub in, eh?"

"Why, George, you are quite a fisherman already, and will be giving Uncle Mark some hints, I expect, when he comes down this afternoon."

"I don't know about that, Harry, but I hope you and I will be giving him and Aunt Fanny some fish this morning. See, here is our night-line! We must be careful, Harry, for Uncle Mark says the eels get off the hooks very easily."

There were three eels on the line, and rare work they gave to the two boys to get them off the hooks, wriggling and twisting about their arms, and making the line in a terrible tangle.

"I'll tell you what, George," says Harry, "I'll tell you what. These creatures don't seem at all to enjoy the situation, and there is no reason why we should hurt them more than we can help.

Let us do as Uncle Mark suggested, and endeavour to stun them with a blow on the back of the neck."

It was a kindly, merciful suggestion of Harry's, and no doubt saved the hard-dying eels much suffering, though it was not a very easy thing to accomplish."

When they had succeeded in getting the eels off the line, and had put them into the basket, they walked along the bank till they came to the place where Uncle Mark had sunk the thief-net.

"Yes," says George, looking searchingly through the water, "it is all right; I can, at all events, just make out one fish, a tench, as I suppose, swimming in the net. But I think we may leave him comfortably there till Uncle Mark comes down."

"Not at all," objected Harry, "for if we take him out, he will make room for others."

"You are right, Harry," replied George; "and, moreover, it is perhaps just as well that we should try our own hand at setting the net again."

And so the net was pulled out and a fine tench added to the basket, with which, when they had

thrown in judiciously some more ground bait, and carefully relaid the net, they set off in high glee to the house.

"If George and Harry were to stay with us for long," said Aunt Fanny at breakfast, "and continue to be such famous fishermen, I think my housekeeper's books would be reduced to a fraction."

"Perhaps they will get tired of it soon," said Uncle Mark, "for they must not expect to be successful every day."

"I should never get tired of it," says Harry.

"Nor I," says George; "I only wish they would let one fish at school."

"Won't Dr. Birchem allow the gentle dissipation of angling, George?" asks Uncle Mark. "I don't think there is much harm in it, except that in some forms it is undoubtedly cruel; and, indeed, I am not sure after all that it is not wiser to make boys take active exercise, and practise their exuberant talent for cruelty in kicking one another's shins at football, and in the other amenities of the playground."

"I don't think that is the reason, uncle," says

Harry, standing up for the dignity of his freedom at school; "I don't think that is the reason. We can do pretty well what we like out of school hours. Why, there's Truman and a lot of us keep a small cry of beagles! Truman hunts them, and I think very likely George will be made second whip next half; besides, I know Johnson minor keeps ferrets for that matter, only you mustn't tell, you know. It's nothing to do with not being allowed, only you know, uncle, there's no fish-pond or river, and one can't do much fishing without that, can one?"

"Why, Harry," replies Uncle Mark, "it does make a difficulty, I must own. You should get Dr. Birchem to flood the big schoolroom, and stock it with carp and tench, and let the eels come to it, as I told you yesterday they do come to take possession of new waters."

"I am afraid it would very soon leak," says Harry.

"Why, it might do that, you know. It reminds me," says Uncle Mark, "of the old story of two gentlemen who had two sets of chambers in the same house, one set being over the other.

Now the man who lived in the lower set happened to be particularly fond of playing on the French horn, and indeed, by practising his scales, used to make day and night so hideous to the man who lived above him, that at last the latter could stand it no longer, and sent down a message to beg that he would select some other spot for the indulgence of his musical tastes.

"So devoted, however, was he of the lower floor to the sound of his notes in his own apartment, that he was discourteous enough to return a message to the effect that if the other gentleman did not like the music he had better leave his rooms, for that he had no intention of ceasing to practise on his French horn, his room being his own, and he, therefore, being entitled to do in it whatever to him seemed best.

"Well, the other gentleman, however much he regretted the want of consideration of his neighbour, saw at once that as the right was with him there was no hope of stopping the noise, and so returned no reply to the message, and to all appearance resigned himself with seeming content to his position.

"One day, however, the musical gentleman happening to lean back in his chair, and to cast his eyes upwards—lost, it may have been, in a rhapsody of dulcet tones which he was producing—happening, I say, so to cast his eyes upwards, he observed a large dark patch spreading gradually over his ceiling, whilst his consternation at the apparition was further heightened by a sudden large drop of water descending from the centre of the patch on to his nose.

"The symphony in B, or whatever musical feat he happened to have been performing, was immediately brought to a sudden close—indeed, I suppose no rhapsody could possibly outlive such cold water being thrown on it—and the indignant and astounded horn-blower called for his servant, and sent him hastily upstairs to acquaint the gentleman there that he must have accidentally upset some water, for that it was already percolating through and destroying his ceiling.

"The servant, however, soon returned, hardly able to conceal his laughter in saying that the gentleman upstairs had bid him reply to the message that 'there had been no accident at all, but

that, feeling the force of his late remark, as to the right of every man to use his room as to him seemed best, he had taken occasion to flood his room in order that he might indulge in his favourite pursuit of angling; that he was having excellent sport from the top of his writing-table, and hoped the gentleman below would not for a moment think of stopping his music on his account, for that since he had found study impossible, and had, in consequence, given himself up to recreation, the strains of the horn, softened as they were by coming through the water, were far from annoying to him.'"

The boys had again a capital day's fishing, the ground bait being found to have attracted a quantity of fish, whose appetite was sufficiently whetted to tempt them to try the paste and other baits which were placed on the hooks.

The carp were found to be very shy, and it was necessary also, the boys perceived, to stand as much as possible out of sight in fishing for the bream; but several were caught, and they were enabled again to replenish their aunt's larder with the spoils of their cunning.



PART II.—THE RIVER.

CHAPTER VI.

A day, with not too bright a beam,
 A warm, but not a scorching sun,
A southern gale to curl the stream,
 And, master, half our work is done.

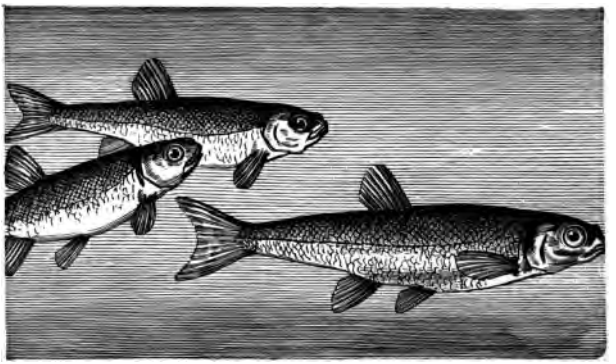
There, whilst behind some bush we wait,
 The scaly people to betray,
We'll prove it just, with treach'rous bait,
 To make the preying trout our prey,

And think ourselves, in such an hour,
 Happier than those, though not so high,
Who, like Leviathans, devour
 Of meaner men the smaller fry.

THE next morning Uncle Mark announced at breakfast that, if they were not already tired of fishing, he proposed that they should go down to the river, and try for some of the varieties of fish that affected a stream in preference to a pond.

George and Harry were delighted, and ran out eagerly from the breakfast-room to make what arrangements were necessary, and to order the pony carriage for Aunt Fanny, who proposed to drive down and lunch with them.

As they were walking across the fields to the river, they came across a little stream in which a quantity of minnows were swimming about.



"There are your old friends, you see, Harry," said Uncle Mark; "but I suppose you despise these little people, since you have captured those aquatic monsters in the pond, eh? Well, Harry, I daresay you prefer larger game, but we mustn't despise the minnows yet, for they are excellent

bait for some fish in the river—for the trout, for instance; which, however, I may tell you, will take a dead minnow, properly handled, I believe, as well as a live one.

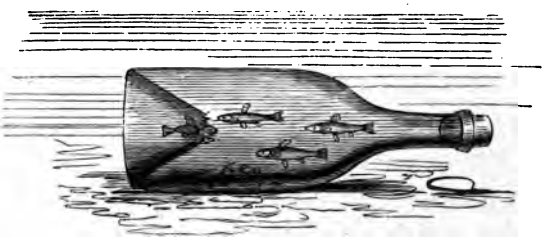
"Walton gives a description of an artificial minnow, which, he says, will catch a trout as well as an artificial fly:—'Let me tell you, what many old anglers know right well, that at some times, and in some waters, a minnow is not to be got,' he says with some truth; and though 'old anglers know right well' also now-a-days that a good artificial minnow may nevertheless be got in certain shops, still you may like to hear Walton's account of his artificial minnows, in case you should one day find yourselves without means of either catching a live one or buying an artificial substitute. Here it is, then:—

"'The mould or body of the minnow was cloth, and wrought upon or over it thus with a needle: the back of it with very sad French green silk, and paler green silk towards the belly, shallowed as perfectly as you can imagine, just as you see a minnow; the belly was wrought also with a needle, and it was a part of it white

silk, and another part of it with silver thread; the tail and fins were of a quill, which was shaven thin; the eyes were of two little black beads, and the head was so shadowed, and all of it so curiously wrought, and so exactly dissembled, that it would beguile any sharp-sighted trout in a swift stream.'

"That, you see, is a highly ingenious method of constructing your minnow, and you can always try your hand at it in spare moments, if you think your fingers are sufficiently delicate for the operation.

"There is a capital plan of catching minnows



however, and that is by placing a bottle, with a hole in the bottom of it, in a stream, taking care, by the way, that the cork is left in the bottle. The enquiring minnow will enter at the gate left

open to him, but, as in the thief-net, or the eel-buck, no way of getting out is easily found."

After some little time the party arrived on the river bank, and Uncle Mark proceeded to open a large pocket-book which he had been carrying, and which contained quite a treasure store of fishing utensils: there were artificial flies



of various sorts, many of which he had made himself; some that were dressed to look like the moss fly, some to resemble the common house-fly, the sand-fly, and others; whilst, in addition to the smaller sorts, there were large salmon flies and others.

"I shall not have time, boys," he said, "to

give you a full description of each of these flies; I hope one day you will learn to make them for yourselves, and to know what particular fly is suitable for different fish, seasons, and waters;





but you must become good anglers before you are promoted to the dignity of the fly-fisher, and I therefore propose to-day that you should fish for some perch, whilst I spin for a trout. But what have you got there, George?"

"That is what I want to know, uncle," says George, who was carrying a small wooden-

looking little insect, which he had picked from under a stone in the water.





"I see what it is; it is what is called a caddis-worm, and I believe is a very good bait for perch in such a bright stream as this. Are they not funny little fellows?"

"But how on earth does it manage to get into such a case?" asked Harry.

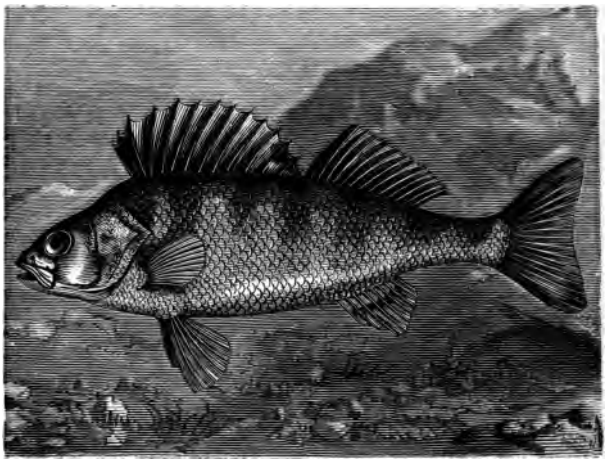
"It spins by its mouth a sort of silken thread, by means of which it attaches various small sticks and stones round itself, as you see.

"Now here is a good spot, I think, for perch. You, Harry, shall try a worm, whilst George shall have this caddis on his hook. It may be possible that I shall also hook a perch with my artificial minnow, for some of the big ones are apt to be caught by spinning, though I am anxious to catch a trout, if I can.

"You must have a fine line, boys, and if you can discern any perch about, drop your bait amongst them quietly; there may very likely be quite a lively competition as to which

will get your bait, if they are in a biting mood.

"That is a good place, Harry, in that hole. It is not quite half-past ten, and I believe perch are generally ready for a bit of luncheon any



PERCH.

time up to eleven in these waters, or for some supper from two in the afternoon till six in the evening. Ah, you have him! Capital!"

George had landed a fish of half-a-pound or thereabouts in weight.

"There he is, you see," says Uncle Mark, "just as Walton describes him, with 'hooked or hog back, which is armed with sharp and stiff bristles, and all his skin armed or covered over with thick, dry, hard scales; and hath, which few other fish have, two fins on his back. He is so bold,' Walton goes on to tell us, 'that he will invade one of his own kind, which the pike will not do so willingly; and you may therefore easily believe him to be a bold biter.'

"There is no doubt he is at certain times a very bold biter, but he does not seem to be so voracious in the winter; indeed, unless the day be a warm one, I believe it to be extremely hard to induce him to bite then at all; but from February to October you may try for a perch with some confidence."

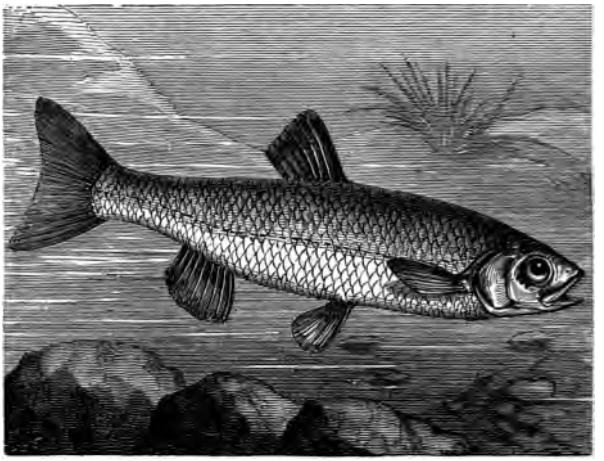
"Look, uncle," here cried Harry, who had not had the good fortune as yet to have any fish tasting his bait—"look, uncle, what a quantity of fishes; surely I had better try for one of them, instead of leaving my float and line idling in this hole."

"Stop a bit, Harry," says Uncle Mark;

"let me see if I can decide what fish they are."

"Surely some of those roach of which you spoke?"

"No, my boy, I should say they are not roach,



DACE.

but are certain fish called dace. It is not, however, a bad suggestion of yours, Harry, for the dace much resembles the roach in some ways. But I think he is a livelier little fellow on the whole, preferring good brisk water, while your roach is perhaps happier in a quieter stream.

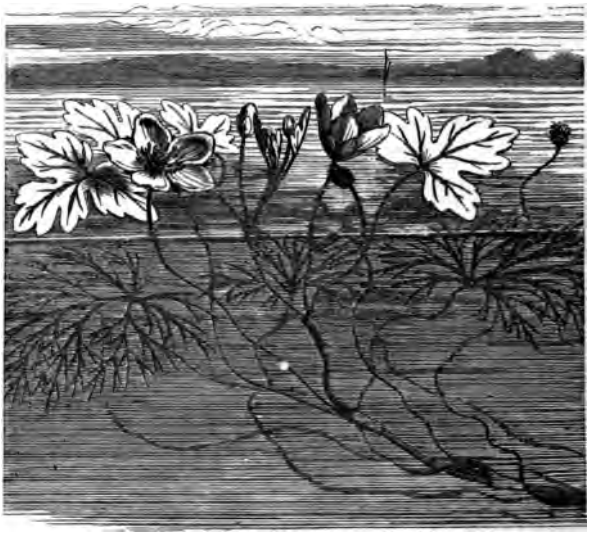
"Can you make out the colour of his fins, Harry? They are not of so bright a red as the roach, perhaps, but, with the exception of the dorsal or back fin, they are of a reddish colour too.

"Dace may be taken very well with a fly, and I might mention that it is considered a skilful feat to hook one of these little fish without lifting it from the water. I merely mention it casually, because it is not a feat which I expect either of you to attempt for some time to come.

"I would suggest that you do not try to catch one at once, for to do so you would have to change your line and hook, which should be very light and small for dace. They will take a worm very well, or a caddis, or paste; but I think you had better wait till another day, for it is not well, now you are fishing for a perch, suddenly to give it up because no fish has immediately come to pay court to your bait, for, as I told you the other day, patience is one of the most essential items of an angler's kit.

"When, however, you do go fishing for dace,

remember that he is very fond of getting under the foam of a mill-race, or down in deep holes under such weeds as you see there, where, poor

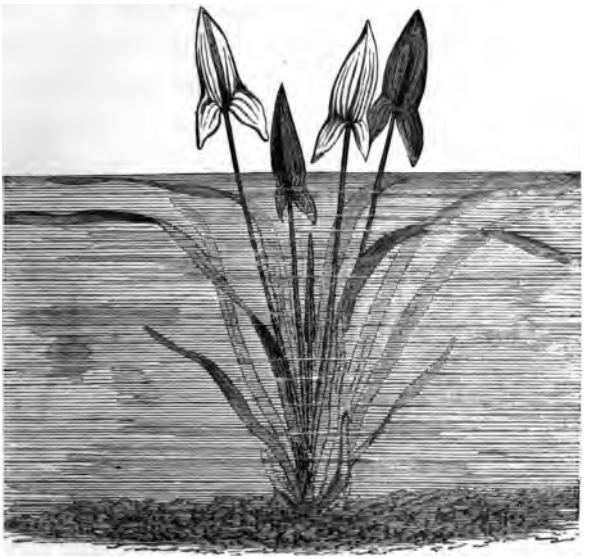


little fellows, they think themselves secure, I suppose."

"But my line would hardly reach so far, uncle."

"Well, Harry, perhaps a few days hence, when you are even a yet more experienced

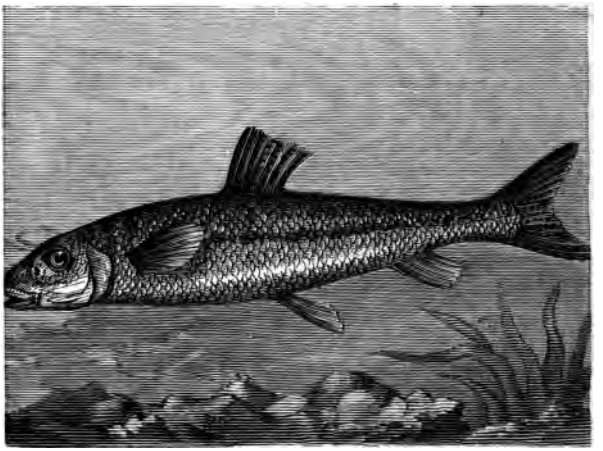
angler, you may try your hand at throwing a fly from a boat, or up by the mill; but for the present I think you must content yourself with a float and hook, and see, there are nice quiet



spots nearer the bank, such as under the arrow-headed reeds yonder, which I should say might very likely be a suitable place to try.

"There are a few other little fish also, boys, that, whilst we are talking of dace, I may

as well tell you something of. There is the gudgeon, for instance, a fish that inhabits still waters as well as rivers, though I believe they prefer a good river and a gravelly soil. I have heard of a gudgeon being taken of half-a-pound weight, but they are not usually so big. They are fond of the bottom of the water,



GUDGEON.

and indeed, except in warm weather, so is the dace, and, therefore, in gudgeon-fishing you must fish very deep, with the bait on the ground indeed, and, I may add, with a very light line

and small hook. And in gudgeon-fishing it is well to disturb the bottom of the water with a pole or rake before you begin to fish, and also when the fish seem to have become tired of biting."

"But will not that drive the fish away?" asks George.

"On the contrary, George, it will most likely have the effect of attracting them, for, inasmuch as there are likely to be many caddis, grubs, &c., lurking about amongst the pebbles and recesses at the bottom of the water, these will be stirred up by the raking, and the fish will come swimming up to the enjoyment of so copious an entertainment."

"It is, in fact, much the same thing as ground baiting, uncle," says Harry.

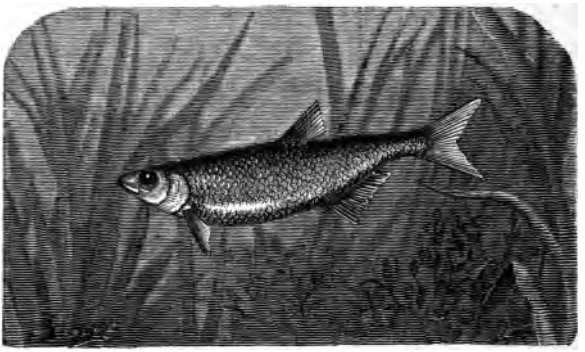
"Very much, Harry."

"And what bait should one use?"

"You may use a worm, or a gentle, or a cad bait, and indeed paste, but remember to keep it at the bottom, letting it bounce along there lightly from stone to stone, as though it were being carried along irresistibly by the current of the stream.

"Gudgeon-fishing is a very favourite amusement with people in the neighbourhood of London from about the end of March.

"And there is another fish, called the bleak,



BLEAK.

that is found in most rivers—little fish not more than six inches long, something indeed like the sprat. They are of a most restless disposition, and never seem to be capable of staying in one place for any length of time with composure, just as you and George are no sooner here than you are eager to be back again with Dr. Birchem; indeed so restless are are they, and so active in catching flies, that they are called by some, 'water swallows.'

"You may use much the same bait for bleak as for gudgeon, and, as with gudgeon, a very fine tackle; but instead of sinking your bait to the bottom, it should be about midway to the bottom.

"They may also be taken with a fly, and I believe it is considered very good practice for an aspiring young fly-fisher to fish for them; but that is not our province just now.

"And now I am going to tell you of a little fish, so small that you might almost think it beneath our notice, and yet of ways and customs so interesting and peculiar as to give it quite a distinct character among fishes. I refer to the stickleback, a fish that you must certainly have seen, and possibly angled for yourselves.

"The stickleback may be said to be almost ubiquitous, inhabiting streams and pools, and indeed not being very fastidious as to whether the water in which he lives be fresh or salt. I believe they exist very well for some time in an aquarium, and though the dull dreariness of such a life seems to me to be so cruel as to deter me from advising you to inflict it, still I will

own that the ways of a stickleback are some excuse for keeping him in glass captivity.

"He is a most pugnacious little fellow, and



STICKLEBACKS.

considering his size, which is perhaps about the smallest of all fish, gives himself some airs, destroying the fry of other fishes, and generally conducting himself in a highly offensive manner.

"It may, I daresay, surprise you to learn that these little fish actually construct nests for themselves, in which they deposit their eggs.

"They begin by collecting bits of straw or stick, with which materials they proceed to construct the bottom of the nest amongst the water-plants, cementing them together by means of exudations from their own bodies, which form a thread in every direction about them. They then proceed to construct the sides, and when the whole is made by the male, he conducts his bride to her new home, which, by the way, is only about the size of a hazel nut, and here she lays her eggs, whilst her lord watches over his house and home with jealous and not unnecessary care, for, as the rogue knows only too well, these eggs are very acceptable to other sticklebacks.

"And now, boys, if you like to leave your own fishing for a little time, you can watch me spinning for a trout, which may be useful to you as an elementary lesson, though you need not aspire to the art just yet for yourselves.

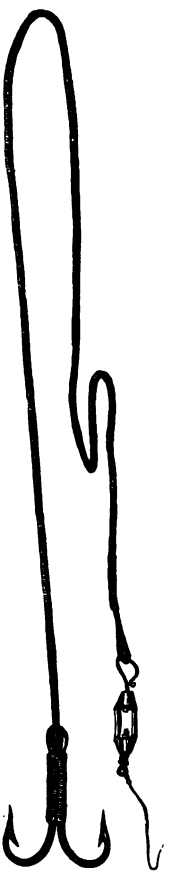
"You see I take, first of all, a minnow, which

is an excellent bait for spinning with, though one of our friends the sticklebacks would answer our purpose fairly well too, provided you first removed his spines, which would certainly look anything but inviting. It is an artificial minnow, which, as I have suggested before, saves needless pain ; and passing down his body is a piece of gut, which comes through the gill and out of the mouth, where it eventually joins the line. At the end of the gut is the hook, fastened down with a silk binding close to the tail of the bait.

"The hook, I should tell you, is not a single one, such as you have been fishing with, but double-pronged, as you see ; and indeed some anglers will have a string of hooks flying loosely round their bait in addition, so that a squeamish trout, turning daintily away from his proffered food, may have some chance of being captured, nevertheless, by these outlying snares. I am showing you, however, only a very simple form of spinning bait.

"Now you must contrive to weight the bait with shot, or, as some prefer, with a little snout

of lead which fits on to the fish, though, of course, our artificial fish may be properly weighted within, so that it may sink easily, and, moreover, be cast with greater precision on the water—whilst you will observe that some little way along the line, above the fish, is a little swivel, which will enable it to spin in the water, when it is opposed by the current, or drawn quickly through the stream or pool.



"See now, boys, I stand out of sight of the water as much as possible, and cast my little minnow down the stream, or I might have thrown it across.

"Now I draw it towards me for a few yards, and the minnow is spinning away merrily.

"Ah! a bite—I already have something taking a fancy to my

artificial bait, you see, and a good fish, too, he seems to be; I must let him have a few turns to tire himself, and let off some of this superfluous energy he is showing, before I risk the strength of my line in bringing him to shore.

"Ah! my fine fellow; so I have you."

George and Harry stood anxiously watching the plunges of the big trout that had so readily taken Uncle Mark's bait, and were eager that he should pull the fish at once on to the bank.

"Stop a bit, boys; don't be in a hurry; this is a biggish fish. Get that landing-net, George. Now, as soon as he is near enough for you to reach him, pop the net under him, so that his weight may not be too much for the line. That is it. Ah! he is off; you did not put it properly under him, and that last plunge has proved a successful forlorn hope for him, you see."

"Oh! Uncle Mark," cried George, in great distress; "how careless of me; you have lost your fish through my fault and clumsiness."

"Never mind, George, don't look so unhappy

about it, old fellow," says Uncle Mark, good humouredly. "I should be but a poor angler if I couldn't lose a fish or two with equanimity, for we all know there's many a slip, and one can never count on a fish till he is in one's basket; and a poor preacher of patience I should be too, if I could not practise that virtue myself. Come, we will try for another; or suppose you take the rod this time, and make up for my not bringing my fish to shore, and then Harry can try."

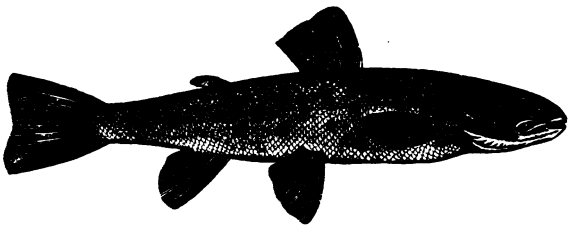
George took the rod and made a great splashing on the water for some time, but no trout seemed at all inclined to be beguiled into supposing that such a disturbance could be made by anything good for food.

Then it was Harry's turn, but his performance was no better than his brother's, and Uncle Mark thought they would learn more by watching himself for a time.

"You see, boys, even the art of spinning for trout is not to be acquired all at once, and requires some little training and practice, so perhaps it would be well I should again try

my hand for a time, lest all the trout in the river be scared away by such a flogging and commotion as you have made; and besides that, if Aunt Fanny's larder is again to be supplied, I think you fellows ought to get your perch rods, for I think I see her ponies coming down the hill yonder, and I fear we shall cut but a poor figure if we have only an empty basket to offer her to return with."

It was not long, however, before Uncle Mark's

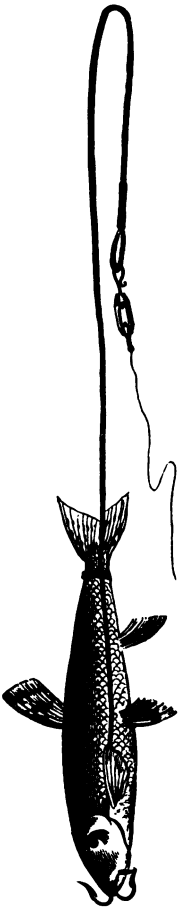


TROUT.

dexterity had secured another fish, and this time, the landing-net being more carefully held, a fine trout was soon in the basket.

"There he is at last," says Uncle Mark, "and just in time to show to your aunt. So much for spinning, boys," he said, as he was removing the fish from the hook. "There are

other modes of capture, however, with which you will no doubt one day be familiar, one of which is called 'roving,' a plan of which I will give you some short account, though I do not encourage its adoption, from the fact that live bait are necessary to carry it out.



"For 'roving,' then, you must take a live minnow, and passing the gut through his mouth and out at the gill, fasten it down at the tail, so that the two-pronged hook may lie on either side of the mouth. Thus secured, he will probably be able to swim about at leisure, until some monster of the deep takes a fancy to him. Another plan of fastening the minnow is to pass a single hook through the dorsal or back fin close to the root, and I am not sure that this

method does not allow the fish more freedom of action.

"The bait thus prepared, you may either have a float above him, to indicate the treatment he is receiving, or not; but if not, it will be necessary to fix a few heavy shot on the line, about nine inches above the bait, to keep it down; and further, by the way, if you elect to use a float, you should have a very big one, lest the little bait itself be able to draw it under, and so to affect its movement as to keep your young mind on a continual strain of unnecessary excitement.

"There are other baits used for 'roving'—as for instance, the gudgeon; but, lest I puzzle you with too many instructions, it will be sufficient for you only to recollect that the minnow is a useful bait enough.

"Do not suppose, however, that for purposes of fishing, and more especially of 'roving,' one minnow is as good as another; for though you will say 'a minnow is a minnow,' yet also is a pudding a pudding; and a trout—or a perch, for that matter, though the latter is grosser in his tastes than the former—a trout, I say, is inclined

to be fastidious in his tastes, and to know the difference between a nice, moderate-sized, silver-looking minnow, and a large, dull, yellow-coloured lump of a thing, just as you two fellows know the difference between the rich, many-plummed dough that Dr. Birchem gives you so much of, and the plain, wholesome rice fare you get at Merryside Hall.

"Always, in fact, look upon your fish as an epicure, who is not to be tempted with mere quantity of food, regardless of quality, and serve his bait to him in the daintiest form possible.

"When the fish has taken your bait, you must give him some few seconds' law before you strike, for though the trout will take it with a violence and rush that speak more for his appetite than his manners, yet the smallest check will make him feel the hook, in which case he will make off at once without tasting the bait further.

"The perch takes his food with somewhat less abrupt voracity of manner, but you must allow him even more law than the trout, for he will not swallow the bait probably till he has roved

with it a little; and, moreover, in perch-fishing there is this drawback—that if a fish feels the hook, he will not only relinquish the morsel between his lips, but will take his departure in company with the rest of the shoal.

"Should a pike be tempted, he will require even more law, for though he also will snatch his food as rudely as the trout, yet he prefers to make off with it to a distance before proceeding to enjoy the pleasures of the table."





CHAPTER VII.

And when the tim'rous trout I wait
To take, and he devours my bait,
How poor a thing sometimes, I find,
Will captivate a greedy mind!
And when none bite, I praise the wise,
Whom vain allurements ne'er surprise.

WILLIAM BASSE.

"YES, Fanny, it's a poor basket as yet, is it not?" said Uncle Mark, when they were all four seated under a tree in the meadows, discussing the good cheer provided for them. "But you see we can't expect a great take every day, and George and Harry, though they promise well, are not perfect anglers yet. But they mean to catch a quantity of perch this afternoon, or, failing that, you may put on a big worm and fish for a trout that way, boys, if you like. Take care, Harry; if you don't sit still, that pie

will be upset over the table-cloth, and present much such a bait for our refection as that minnow you and George offered so vigorously to the trout just now."

"But will a trout take a worm, uncle?" asked Harry.

"To be sure he will, if you offer it to him with a good grace, and if, moreover, you don't try to take him in the winter; for, as Walton says, 'till the sun gets to such a height as to warm the earth and the waters, the trout is sick, and lean, and lousy, and unwholesome; for you shall, in winter, find him to have a big head, and then to be lank, and thin, and lean.' And he tells us that the trout continues many months out of season."

"All the time lank and with a big head?" asked George.

"I think so, George; but according to Walton this bigness of head seems to be a symptom that he is not in condition, for he tells us 'he is not like the crocodile, which, if he lives never so long, yet always thrives till his death; but 'tis not so with the trout, for after he is come to

his full growth, he declines in his body, and keeps his bigness, or thrives only in his head till his death.'"

"What a mysterious fish," said Aunt Fanny.

"Yes, and there is another peculiarity about the trout, which is, that you may fish for him by night. Let us see what Walton says of it.

"'You are to know,' he writes, 'there is night as well as day-fishing for a trout, and that in the night the best trouts come out of their holes; and the manner of taking them is, on the top of the water, with a great lob or garden worm, or rather two, which you are to fish with in a place where the water runs somewhat quietly, for in a stream the bait will not be so well discerned. I say in a quiet or dead place near to some swift; there draw your bait over the top of the water, to and fro, and if there be a good trout in the hole, he will take it, especially if the night be dark, for then he is bold, and lies near the top of the water, watching the motion of any frog, or water-rat, or mouse that swims between him and the sky; these he hunts

after, if he sees the water but wrinkle or move in one of these dead holes, where these great old trouts usually lie near to their holes; for you are to note, that the great old trout is both subtle and fearful, and lies close all day, and does not usually stir out of his hole, but lies in it as close in the day as the timorous hare does in her form; for the chief feeding of either is seldom in the day, but usually in the night, and then the great trouts feed very boldly.'

"But come, boys, I think we have fed, like the trout, 'boldly' ourselves, and had better return to our rods."

And so the luncheon basket was again packed, and Uncle Mark and the boys again baited their hooks, and fished all the afternoon, whilst Aunt Fanny sat by them, and watched their sport.

And when the evening began to creep on, and it was time to catch Snap and Dragon, the two ponies, who had had a fine time of it, turned loose all this while in the meadow, and to go away home again to Merryside Hall—when this

time, I say, had come, they found that Uncle Mark had caught six trout, whilst the boys had caught seven perch between them; so that the day, after all, had not been without results.

They then carefully unjointed their rods, and commenced wending their way homewards; and when they had come to a wilder part of the river amongst the rocks, there was suddenly a slight splash in the water some yards ahead of them, and Uncle Mark stopped short, and looked very carefully about the bank, near which ripples were rolling as if some creature had suddenly taken to the water. The boys followed their uncle's example, but nothing could be seen.

"Was it a big fish, uncle?" asked George.

"It was not a fish, George."

"Not a fish!"

"No, my boy, an otter, I think—a gentleman whom we can very well do without, for, as Walton says, 'I hate them perfectly, because they love fish so well, or rather, because they destroy so much.'

"Never mind, boys, we must get our neighbour, Colonel Dabbles, over with his otter hounds—that will give you great sport one of these mornings. It is not a sport that I care much about myself, I confess, but I shall be



glad to have them killed if there are any about.

"Yes, otters are great enemies to fishermen, doing a great deal of mischief amongst the trout.

Piscator, who figures as one of the characters in 'Walton,' was so full of zeal when present at an otter hunt, that he declares—

"'Come, honest Venator, let us be gone! let us make haste! I long to be doing; no reasonable hedge or ditch shall hold me.'

"And you may possibly have read those lines of Gay—

'Would ye preserve a num'rous finny race,
Let your fierce dogs the rav'nous otter chase;
Th' amphibious monster ranges all the shores,
Darts through the waves, and every haunt explores.'

"It is possible, however, I am told, to turn this little enemy into a friend, for they have been known not only to be tamed, but to follow their master like a dog, and even to catch and bring him fish."

And so that day at the river ended, and the poor little fish were left in peace for the night, as far as the boys were concerned, and very likely the big old trout that Walton spoke of came out and looked about him for his water-rat or mouse, as did the big horned

owl, the principal, if not the only sportsman who was still abroad whilst George and



Harry were dreaming in their beds at Merryside Hall.



CHAPTER VIII.

Always be doing! for no doctor can invent
A surer nostrum 'gainst grim discontent.
Unless our life be full, regrets have way,
And feeble wishes occupy our day.
Those who have business, can their business do;
Those who have leisure, can at least some sport pursue
Nor need we sigh that circumstances hard,
Our usual work or pleasures have debarred;
Something is found, by those who really seek,
To fill our hands each hour of the week.
Thus, though the snow lie thickly on the ground,
Yet may the huntsman tend each ailing hound,
Busy himself to note each canine trait,
And midst his pack and horses pass the day.
So may the fisher, though the stream be dry,
Go mend his nets, or tie the feathered fly.

THESE halcyon days which the boys were passing at Merryside Hall had hitherto been graced by cloudless summer skies; but one morning a change came over this comfortable state of things, and when George woke at six o'clock, he became conscious at once that

no honeysuckle was shadowed on his window-blind by the morning sun, and that a steady tattoo of rain-droppings was being sounded from every projecting eave and pipe on to the object beneath it.

"It doesn't look promising, I'm afraid," said Uncle Mark, as he scanned the grey, damp distance from the breakfast-room window—"it doesn't look promising for out-door pleasures certainly. I daresay the fish in the big pond are tolerably indifferent to the rain, but they are much more ready to bite after a shower than during its continuance; and though I have known fish taken during soft rain on a muggy day, the fun of standing by the side of a pond, in such a soaking downfall as this, is not very inspiriting, however zealous one may be; and even supposing your ardour were equal to it, I don't feel justified in exposing you to such a damp ordeal. So we will leave the park and the pond to the mushrooms and the frogs to-day, boys, and as matters don't look lively outside, we'll turn our attention to indoor affairs, and make the best of it, for

" Far does the man all other men excell,
Who in his wisdom thinks of all things well;
Wisely considering, to himself a friend,
All for the present best, and to the end."

Those lines are a translation by somebody from Hesiod, as the cultured Harry was, no doubt, about to remind me. They are capital lines, at all events, and very apt to our present circumstances, which appear to be sufficiently dejected to give play to our most philosophical efforts.

" And now, boys, this apparently untoward state of the weather gives me an opportunity of showing you how there was some truth in the constant boastings of Walton as to the superior advantages of angling over other sports. For, glorious as is the fun of galloping to hounds, let Jack Frost put in an appearance, and your hunting man, as far as his particular sport is concerned, is bereft of occupation. When he has felt the legs of all his hunters, there is nothing left for him to do but to gaze mournfully at his neglected boots and breeches, or to tap the obstinate barometer in forlorn hopes of a change in the weather.

"Or, again, look at your shooting man, cast by some mischance in a country where there is nothing he may shoot—where the game, perhaps, requires a year of rest, or the weather is too bad even to shoot pheasants. He can load cartridges, it is true, or clean his own gun if he likes; but, however useful, either occupation is perhaps a trifle monotonous, and he may possibly be haunted in the course of his industry by a consciousness that the work would be equally well performed by the gun-maker or the gamekeeper.

"Bob Angler, however, on the contrary, let the weather be never so unpropitious—let the streams be dry, or the fish too few and far between to make an attempt at their capture worth his while—yet need not be unoccupied, for his craft has many calls on his ingenuity besides the mere actual handling of the rod.

"His nets, for instance, may require mending, a broken top-joint must be spliced, his lines, that have been drying, must be put carefully in order. And, in addition to the many requirements of his tackle, he need never be at a loss

for useful occupation, if he is able, as he should most undoubtedly be, to tie his own flies. And it is in reference to this last accomplishment that I propose to have a talk with you this morning."

George and Harry followed Uncle Mark into his own room, the one described in the beginning of this book, and were busied for some time in assisting him to get in order what, to the unaccustomed eye, might seem a hopeless tangle and litter of rods, tackle, hooks, and other fishing etcetera. It was awkward work at first; the lines got into unexpected knots in their unpractised hands, and the hooks had a knack of continually catching in their fingers or their clothes; but after a time their hands became more deft, and ere long every single bit of gear was in its appointed place, ready to hand, as the paraphernalia of a good craftsman should always be.

"I haven't told you much of fly-fishing yet, boys," said Uncle Mark, "for, as young beginners, it was quite sufficient for you to become proficient in the science of bottom-fishing,

without aspiring all at once to the more dignified attainment of throwing a fly; and indeed, if I were to talk all day and all night, I don't know that I should be able thereby to make you in the least masters of the art, which, like most others that are worth acquiring, can only be properly mastered by practice.

"I can, however, give you a few initiatory hints, which may be sufficient to whet your appetite to know more and to acquire more, by actual practice, when occasion shall offer.

"But before I can hope to arouse your ambition to such an end, I think I ought to impress upon you the fact that a fly-fisher is a person of some consequence amongst anglers, one who regards your mere bottom-fishers with a little contempt. It is quite true that the humble bottom-fisher is able to follow his sport on many days when to throw a fly would be mere waste of time; and, moreover, that whereas the quarry of the fly-fisher is limited to a few kinds of fish, our patient bottom-fisher may drop his paste or worm in almost any water, and hope not unreasonably that some customer,

be it only a roach or a minnow, will be found to fancy his wares. On the other hand, if only a few kinds of fish will rise to the fly, they at least are those of the nobler kind, whilst the sport itself requires more skill, and, I might add, more exercise; in contrast to the quiescent angle, the line of the fly-fisher is constantly sweeping about in graceful curves, whilst the bait at the end of it is not the insipid paste, the wriggling worm, or the slimy gentle, but a tiny triumph of the sportsman's own careful study and skill in manipulation.

"As to this said skill in manufacture, however, I ought to tell you that it is a question amongst some whether fish take a fly because they really believe it to be what it seems, or whether they are attracted to it as being something—if not the fly they are accustomed to—at least new and apparently good to eat.

"The salmon, for instance, according to one opinion, comes up the rivers *blazé* of the bustle of ocean life, and sated with its diet of small fish, and is ready to take whatever his new quarters may offer, without being too critical

as to whether the dainty on the surface of the water be flesh or fowl. Others differ from this view, and I confess that I am inclined to think otherwise myself also; for, as is well known, fish will frequently rise only at one class of fly, and are apt to be extremely fastidious in taking only certain species under certain atmospheric conditions. In any case, the shock must be very rude, when what appeared to be a juicy morsel proves on close acquaintance to be, not to mention the hook, little more than feathers, silk, or worsted; but I have a better opinion of a fish's intelligence and sense of the fitness of things, than to suppose him ready to snap at any gaudy trash which may flit before him, without being misled as to its identity with a living representative.

"I should urge you, therefore, by all means, in making your flies, to copy as faithfully as possible the insect you propose to represent, never thinking it immaterial whether the colours you have to put together should exactly match the original, or that shape is of little consequence. If our butter were served to us at

breakfast of a rich orange colour, or our eggs made their appearance in a rectangular shape, we should be justified in thinking something must be amiss; and we have no right to suppose that a fish is less critical as to colour and shape, or to expect him hungrily to gobble up a bunch of red feathers, under the impression they are indeed one of the family of his beloved March browns.

"I have read, by the way, of a French lady who was devoted to fly-fishing, and was, I believe, no mean proficient in the elegant accomplishment of casting her fly upon the water, but who, nevertheless, was never successful in catching a fish, or indeed in inducing one to rise to her fly. And the reason was perhaps not far to seek, for, subordinating the sport she had in hand to her taste in millinery, she invariably insisted that her fly should match her dress.

"A few days ago, when I was talking to you of rods, &c., I believe I advised that you should, as a rule, purchase your fishing paraphernalia in preference to making it yourself,

because one might expect that a practised manufacturer would turn out a better article than you could yourselves manage to construct. I must make an exception to this rule, however, in the case of flies, or, at all events, to this extent, that no amount of practice will be thrown away that will *enable* you to make them for yourselves, if occasion should require.

"Many a wet day have I spent, profitably to my angling pursuits, in manufacturing such various flies as might one day be useful to me, and in doing so, not only was I put in possession of a multifarious collection of likely baits, but also acquired such a dexterity of manipulation as has enabled me on several occasions since to knock off readily and quickly a fair portrait in silk and feather, on the banks of the stream itself, of some fly which I perceived to be in special demand at the time, and which did not happen to be in my book of collections.

"Sometimes, and from some unexplained cause, fish will take greedily one particular fly, and will pass unnoticed any former favourite which you may offer them; and, again, it may

happen that the fish of one part of the stream will take a fly which quite fails to tempt those of another part of the same water. Nor need we wonder at this; for in its course a river flows through a variety of different localities, and one may reasonably suppose that the insects which hover about low marshy ground will be of a different species from those that affect rocky banks, and that these again will differ from those that naturally belong to woodlands.

"Your wary fisherman then will keep his eyes about him, and if he finds his finny quarry persistently to refuse his bait, he will note whether any difference exists in the nature of the banks and country adjoining to those wherefrom he has hitherto found his fly a killing one, and will note also what insects the fish appear to be rising to.

"Then if he be skilled in the manufacture of flies, he will soon catch one of the species that seems to please, and ere long will have effected such a likeness of it, from the various silks and feathers and other stores in his pocket-book, as will enable him to compete on more equal

terms with the real flies for the favourable notice of the fish."

"But," says George, "why, if he is able so readily to catch a real fly, need he trouble to tie one for himself?"

"That is a very reasonable question, George, I must admit, and apparently at first sight unanswerable," says Uncle Mark. "But there *is* a reason all the same, and it is this, that so fragile is the real fly that it would be extremely hard to retain it on the hook, or even to place it there at all in some cases, so small are some species of gnats, &c., that make killing baits. Even if placed on the hook, a very few casts would probably be sufficient to destroy it, and the labour of constantly replacing it would be but tiresome waste of time.

"So that I would by all means impress upon you to learn to make your flies with facility for yourselves, and not to trust solely to the assistance of the fishing-tackle shops to supply and replenish your store. Your skill, as I have told you, may help you at a pinch to supply a fly on the river bank; whereas, though your

pockets be stuffed with bank notes, it is nothing to the fish, who will complacently feed on his pet flies, like a true philosopher and gentleman, appreciating his dainty for its own sake, and not for its pecuniary value.

"But though it is not wise to trust solely to tackle-makers for your supply, you may very profitably and properly invoke their aid in giving you a few lessons in the art of tying flies, which will be worth far more to you than all I could say or write, and indeed without which I don't think you are very likely to become experts. For, were I to talk to you by the hour, I think I should only produce in your minds a confusion of technical words, such as 'lapping,' 'whipping,' and 'double hitching,' which would, however, soon become familiar to you in the practical lessons which I should not have time to give you myself this morning, but which I hope, as I said before, may be given you by some good practitioner of the art elsewhere.

"But in preparation for the day when you shall have mastered the science and knack of

fly-dressing, you would do well, whilst you are here, to begin making a collection of the various odds and ends which may be likely to prove useful to you—such materials, I mean, as silk, wool, fur, hair, and feathers. These will form a very useful collection by-and-by, and I should recommend you to arrange each material, and moreover each shade of colour, as neatly as possible, in separate little boxes or cases of some sort, so that you may have a colour as ready to hand as if you were an artist painting a picture. And it would be well also to make your little cases as air-tight as possible, putting in some camphor, tobacco, or turpentine to keep away moths and other small depredators, which have an insinuating habit of pushing their way into places where they are not exactly wanted.

"I don't think you can go very far wrong in gathering together any stray bits of fur that you may find about, be it rabbit, rat, badger, squirrel, mole, mouse, ferret, or pole-cat; for one never knows what nice variety of colour or texture one may not one day require.

"And the same suggestion holds good also with regard to feathers, very few of which you need think too commonplace to have in stock. The peacock, the wild-duck, the widgeon, the teal, the pheasant, the partridge, the jay, the wood-pigeon, the turkey, even the commonplace sparrow, lark, or starling, all will yield you treasures of some sort or another, which you will do well to lay by, as with the furs, in neat boxes, carefully marked, that you may know what they are and whence you got them.

"Nor need you be above storing your collection with silks of various hues, with divers coloured waxes, and with the ordinary cobbler's wax in particular—with worsteds too, and fine gold and silver wire. For all these little things, that sound so ordinary and easy to be got at any time, will not always be at hand precisely when they are wanted, and it would be extremely annoying to find yourself debarred from making a likely fly by being unable to procure some commonplace requisite, such as mere worsted, for instance, which, though plentiful enough when near home, and when ladies

are about, yet may be hard enough to acquire readily on a Norwegian river or an Irish lake, let us say.

"And in talking of colour, it is as well to remind you that the water will probably make your fly a darker colour, and therefore, in matching it, it is judicious to wet the feather or silk first, for though you may very properly remark that the real fly also is on the water, yet he will not get wet and soaked as will his artificial representative, and so change his colour. Nor is it amiss to caution you against matching your colours by candle-light; for it would be a sad disappointment were you to sally out equipped with the results of a long evening's patient work, and, on arriving at your river, discover that the tints were all different by daylight, as would most probably be the case. You may, however, if time be too precious in the day-time to allow of the occupation of fly-dressing, sort out the colours required in the daylight, and busy yourself safely enough by candle-light in the actual tying.

"Walton says there are twelve kinds of flies;

but then Walton lived a long time ago, and I daresay I could enumerate nearer a hundred to you, were I to endeavour to do so. But it is worthy of remark that, as time goes on, a different species of fly is sometimes found to affect certain rivers to that formerly found there; for the contingent changes wrought by ever so small a circumstance are very numerous, and just as the plough turning up the clod disturbs the haunt of the field-mouse, the mole, and numerous infinitely smaller creatures, so the draining of a mere, for instance, not only changes the atmospheric and general circumstances necessary to certain insects, but also washes away the larvæ, and so effects a sweeping change. On the river Wandle, for instance, it is said that the May-fly is not seen, or, at all events, that the trout there will not rise to it; and so, though the poet has sung—

> 'Merton willows, they bend and quiver,
> As the trout swim low in Wandle river;'

yet I suspect they will continue to swim low, throw you your May-fly never so diligently.

"And now, boys, I think I have given you such few useful hints in the ways of fly-fishing as may stand you in stead when you pursue the sport sufficiently in earnest to lead you to acquire the art of fly-tying for yourselves. I have not time to give you more minute and technical instructions, and, as the weather appears to be clearing, I think the best thing you can do is to put on thick boots, and be off to the pond to see whether fish will not indeed bite freely after rain!"





PART III.—THE SEA.

CHAPTER IX.

God quickened, in the sea and in the rivers,
So many fishes of so many features,
That in the waters we may see all creatures,
Even all that on the earth are to be found,
As if the world were in deep waters drown'd ;
For seas, as well as skies, have sun, moon, stars ;
As well as air—swallows, rooks, and stares ;
As well as earth—vines, roses, nettles, melons,
Mushrooms, pinks, gilliflowers, and many millions
Of other plants, more rare, more strange than these ;
As very fishes, living in the seas.

"GEORGE and Harry," said Uncle Mark solemnly one morning, when the two boys came down to breakfast—"George and Harry, I think you have both been staying as long at Merryside as is good for you, and it is now time that you both take your departure, so

be good enough to pack your trunks, each of you, immediately after breakfast."

George and Harry, however, were not to be taken in by any serious expression on Uncle Mark's face. Aunt Fanny was smiling kindly on them from behind the tea-urn, and already there was a little comical pucker gathering in the corners of Uncle Mark's eyes, which betokened that some merry plan was in preparation for their entertainment.

"George may do as he pleases," says Harry stoutly; "I stay here."

"Then, Harry, we must leave you behind, I fear, for George and I and your aunt are going off for an expedition to the seaside for a few days. Write to us, Harry, and let us know how you get on—how many big trout you have flogged into taking your bait, and how many other monsters you have captured."

And so it came out that kind Uncle Mark had arranged to take the boys over to Sandborough, a small fishing village some fifteen miles distant on the sea coast.

"You have shown such zeal, both of you, in

studying the ways of the sticklebacks and other small fry, and such vigour in the capture of trout, and perch, and carp, that I think we must not cramp your energies, but see if we cannot hook a whale," says Uncle Mark.

What spirits the boys were in, as they bolted their breakfast at a speed that would have brought on apoplexy in anybody but a school-boy, and ran upstairs to thrust their small toilet necessaries into their bags!

Soon after breakfast the mail phæton came round to the door for Uncle Mark, Aunt Fanny, and the little packet of baggage; whilst Snap and Dragon, ever ready for any duty that might be imposed on them, stood saddled for the two boys.

What a truly wonderful beast is a boy's pony, and how perfectly adapted to the ways of that boisterous, thoughtless biped is it! With what uncomplaining readiness does it adapt itself to a long day of activity at the call of its young master, whether in a rough course of schooling over cut timber in the park, in becoming an extempore tandem leader to the

donkey, in being pushed at top speed over the heaviest of ploughs as close as possible to a pack of hounds, or in carrying a message at a gallop along the most macadamantine of roads! And with all these calls on his energies, how nimbly will he finish the day by trotting to the nearest post-town with the letter-bag; and how, despite all the foregoing calls on his legs and wind, will he nevertheless cheerfully eat his evening corn, and retire to his litter with back-sinews, hocks, and legs generally as clean and free from strains and splints and spavins, and all the diseases to which his larger brethren are subject with half his knocking about, as though he were a new-born colt!

Snap and Dragon proved no exception to the rule above, and scampered along the roads and raced over the short turf of the downs like a couple of rough Scotch terriers, arriving eventually at the Anchor Inn, rather warm, it is true, but otherwise apparently as merry and ready for a gallop as ever.

"Now, boys," says Uncle Mark, clattering up to the door of that hostel some ten minutes

after his little escort of very light cavalry—"now, boys, first of all help your aunt out of the carriage, and then at once see that your ponies have water, that their girths are loosed, and that they have a good feed each. They are very generous little fellows, and deserve to be treated as tenderly as though they were entered for the Derby."

The Anchor, though no doubt a small, was as snug and clean a little inn as any traveller need care to put up in, with a wide porch grown over with honeysuckles, and a quaint old parlour with a high, dark wainscot, and a big bow window that commanded a view of the beach and the sands, and the great rolling sea beyond.

There, down by the shore, George and Harry could see several fishing smacks that had recently come in, and had been unloading their treasures into carts and baskets, which would take them up to market, or, it might be, send them straight away to London.

Old Mrs. Sturdy, the landlady of the inn, was as glad to see Uncle Mark and Aunt Fanny

as though they were her own son and daughter, having known them ever since they were children, and having indeed been herself in service at Merryside Hall before her marriage to



FISHING SMACKS UNLOADING.

John Sturdy the fisherman. Poor old woman! it was a great treat to her to see faces she loved under her roof, for hers was frequently a very lonely life when her husband was away at sea, and a very anxious one too, as the wind and

storm whistled amongst her chimneys and reminded her of her good old man braving it in his little ship out there amongst the waves.

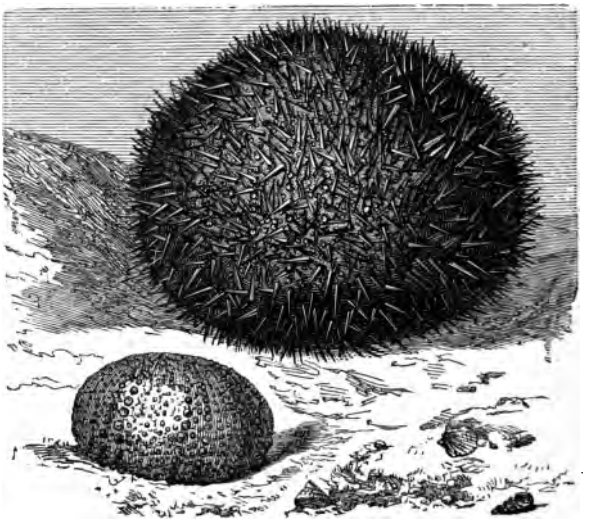
George and Harry had seen but little of the seaside before in their lives, and were full of wonder and curiosity at all the little objects that they found lying about on the beach or elsewhere on the coast.

Everything enchanted them—the ships standing out to sea under full sail, the boats rocking at anchor nearer shore, the great white gulls floating lazily through the air, or dipping, apparently objectlessly, in the water, whilst at their feet were shells of various sizes and colours, and sea-anemones in many of the pools left by the receding tide.

"Very wonderful it all is, is it not, boys?" says Uncle Mark; "it is hard to say whether the sea-anemone is a fish or a flower. Your Aunt Fanny, who, as you know, loves flowers very dearly, seems to think they can almost feel. Now it seems to me that the sea-anemone is just the connecting link between the vegetable and the lower animal world.'

"But look, uncle," cries George; "surely here is a veritable hedgehog!"

"Well, George, it is not unlike one, is it? and it is, in fact, a sort of sea-hedgehog."



George had found a curious ball-like creature, protected all over by formidable spikes, similar to the common hedgehog.

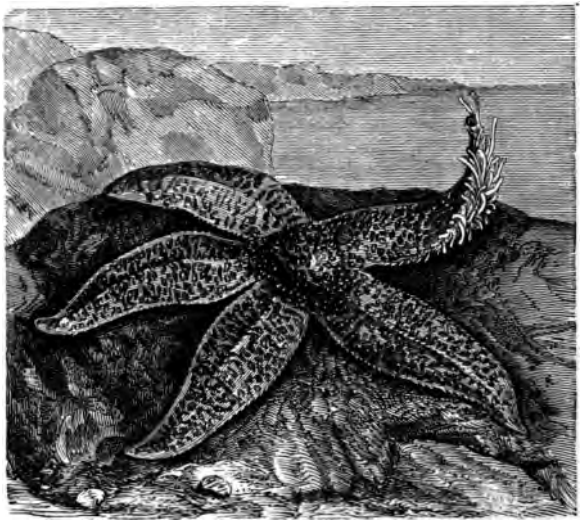
"But how has it managed to get into such a comfortable hole in the rock?" asks Harry.

"Ah! Harry, that is the question. Some

people say they dig their own holes, but I think it must be an exceedingly tough job if they do, more particularly as they are sometimes found comfortably settled in granite rock. I must confess, however, that his little house seems to fit him marvellously well, and for aught I know he may have some means of scooping out a cavity to his comfortable liking. He is rather a retired, hermit-like fellow in his ways, and with those spikes of his could resent any attempt to disturb his privacy with some effect. I daresay you might not think it by his appearance, but that very rough coat of his is pierced with as many holes as there are bristles, and through these little holes emerge the feet or tentacles. Then there is also a wider hole for the mouth. Altogether he is rather a remarkable creature.

"But here is one also worthy of note. It is called a star-fish from its shape, as you may suppose. You see there are five, so to speak, rays emanating from a sort of ball in the centre. Some of the species have many more rays—as many even as thirty or more. These rays are not claws, as some suppose, but are part of the

body ; and so tenacious is he of life that I am told you may remove the rays, even all but one, and yet he will not only live, but repair the damage. He is of a reddish colour, as you see above, and underneath is whitish, and there we



find innumerable little things, like worms, moving about. These are the tentacles, and he can make very good way either by crawling or by swimming through the water."

" But is he alive ?" asked George.

"Oh yes, he is alive now, and is waiting for the return of the tide. Should he be cast so high on shore as to be out of reach of the returning water, however, he would not live long; that is a proceeding he cannot put up with, despite his tenacity of life.

"It is not very easy, I should tell you, to catch one of these creatures in its entirety, for they have a knack of casting their rays in a somewhat remarkable and, to a specimen hunter, disappointing fashion, and I recollect a funny story told by a Mr. Forbes, who gave an account of how he endeavoured to examine a specimen he had caught on his boat seat, but how the creature, resenting, I suppose, his curiosity, dissolved partnership at once, and broke up into fragments. Mr. Forbes, nothing daunted, took with him next time a bucket of cold fresh water, intending to place the star-fish therein, but apparently the fresh water was so very distasteful to the second capture that the very sight of the bucket was sufficient to bring on a like dissolution, and only one limb or ray could be grasped before the rest of him disappeared in the deep.

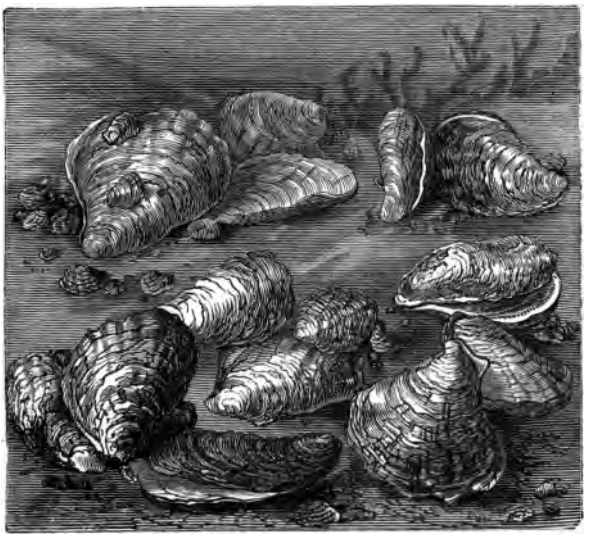
CHAPTER X.

So rotten planks of broken ships do change
To barnacles. Oh! transformation strange!
'Twas first a green tree, then a broken hull;
Lately, a mushroom; now, a flying gull.

"BUT, George and Harry, you notice all these strange apparitions, and, perhaps not unnaturally, pass over what is common to your eyes, the prosaic every-day oyster shell. Poor oysters! Their description, as having no head and no feet, as being, moreover, jawless and toothless, reminds one rather of Shakspere's seventh age—the lean and slippered pantaloon, sans teeth, sans eyes, sans everything. Oysters have been regarded from very early times as desirable food. Pliny, as you boys of course know, calls it the palm or glory of the table; and indeed, as long as people are content to pay

such prodigous prices as we have to pay now-a-days for them, it would appear that they are still the palm or glory of the table.

"The oyster has a very distinct way of



rearing its young. Instead of casting its spawn on the world at such a tender age as most other marine creatures do, it takes some watchful care over their existence and, it may be, their education, keeping them com-

fortably in the maternal shell the while till they at least are provided with some sort of means of locomotion and even with some sort of eyes. Inasmuch, however, as the jolly little family consists of some 1,200,000 little oysters, the household cares becomes too serious at last, and the anxious parent commits her offspring one day altogether to the deep, to go out and make their own way in the world.

"When this important event takes place, the water becomes dark with the family exodus, and the young spawn, now promoted to the dignity of 'spat,' is carried away by the current, and swims about in the full enjoyment of his new freedom for some little time, till, tired of seeing life and the world, he fixes on to some rock, or another oyster shell it may be, and settles down into so quiet and respectably domestic an existence that his swimming apparatus drops off, and he becomes simply one of a large community, which we call an oyster bed.

"In about a year and a-half he is ready to become the 'palm or glory of the table,' though, to be sure, I believe many are so backward as to

require ten years before they are fit to be translated to that dignity.

"There are three different sorts of oysters, however, the least desirable being those from the deep banks. They are larger than the others, but those that retain their water by being more subject to the ebb and flow of the tide are thought to be the easier and longer preserved, whilst no doubt the best sort are those that are reared on artificial oyster beds.

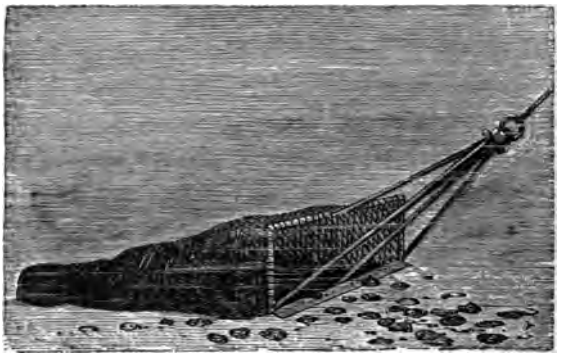
"These artificial beds or parks, first introduced—as George, quoting Pliny, was about to tell us—by one Sergius Oratæ, a gentleman celebrated, as far as I know, only for this exploit; these oyster parks, I say, are simply large basins walled in and connected with the sea by such means as will enable the water to be let in or out at pleasure, and fitted with posts or such other objects as the roving young oysters will attach themselves to.

"I need not, perhaps, describe to you the nature of oyster-dredging, by means of which the oysters, along with other things, are obtained from the bottom. It is simply in the nature of a heavy

drag-net, and much like the dredging apparatus you have no doubt seen on the river."

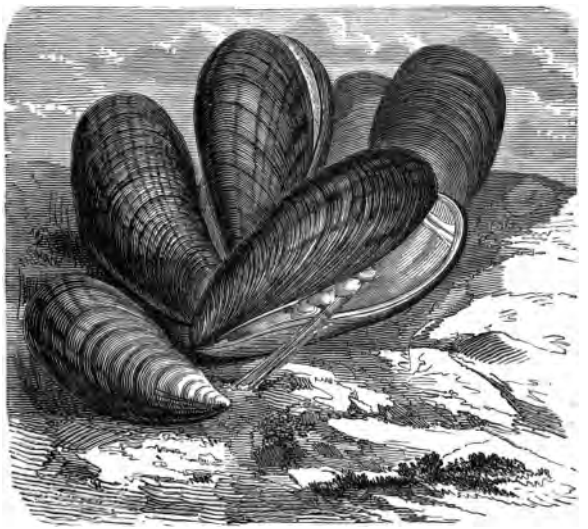
"And are these oysters, too, uncle?" asks Harry, holding up a long black pair of shells.

"Why, Harry, you know a mussel, don't you?" replies Uncle Mark; "that is a very common sort of shell-fish, and one that is eaten



in vast quantities by people on our sea-coasts; though some imagine that it contains a poison, which, however, is attributed to the food which it eats, being indeed, I think, not unfrequently the eggs of our friend the star-fish. In some places people form what are called mussel gardens, much as I told you that worthy Roman

gentleman formed an oyster park—that is to say, they fix stakes in the ground, with interwoven branches, on the coast, to which these mussels cling.



"This plan was discovered by an Irishman named Walton—not Izaak of that name, mind—so long ago as the year 1235. Shipwrecked off the coast of France, he earned a precarious existence by catching sea-birds, and one day happened to discover that the mussels

which clung to the poles of his net were better food than those in the mud. He therefore formed a 'bouchot,' as it is called, or mussel garden, in order to catch some more; not a very scientific feat, perhaps, but one that has given food to many mouths for six hundred years since, nevertheless."

The rest of the day was spent very pleasantly in wandering thus with Uncle Mark about the sea-shore, and towards evening they met old John Sturdy himself coming up from his smack, who was delighted to see them, and who became at once a great ally of the boys. He showed them his nets and the little model which he had made of his smack, which he had named "The Grace," and he taught them moreover how to tie the most cunning of knots, an accomplishment which, you may be sure, gained them great respect amongst their schoolfellows afterwards at Dr. Birchem's. He taught them, moreover, how to make and mend nets for themselves; and altogether, Uncle Mark's nose bid fair to be put quite out of joint by the practical information of this marine luminary.

"I shall send the boys to you the next time they come to Merryside, Sturdy," says Uncle Mark, "and so get rid of the trouble of looking after them."

"Ay, sir, you may do so, and welcome," replies John Sturdy, with a wistful look in his old weather-beaten face. "Laws, sir, if you knew what it is to me and my old missis to hear their young voices about the place—but there, it ain't for me to be a talkin'. Would the young gents now have a swim in the morning, or would they like a sail? What shall I do to amuse them sir?"





CHAPTER XI.

Sweet day! so cool, so calm, so bright!
The bridal of the earth and sky;
Sweet dews shall weep thy fall to-night,
For thou must die.

Sweet rose! whose hue, angry and brave,
Bids the rash gazer wipe his eye,
Thy root is ever in its grave,
And thou must die.

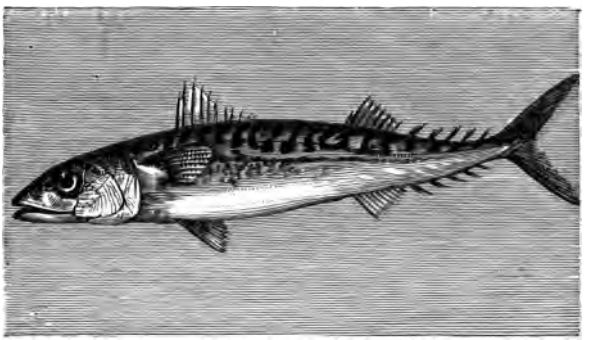
HERBERT.

GEORGE and Harry, of course, did choose to have a swim, and were up at seven o'clock in the morning to that end, and, having spent the most delicious two hours with John Sturdy, came in blooming to breakfast, with the appetites of ogres, and with a long account of that old salt's yarns, and of his smack, which they had thoroughly inspected from stem to stern.

"And do you know, uncle," cries Harry, with his mouth full of eggs and bacon, "that

old Sturdy has promised us a sail in her, and that he is going out very soon to fish for mackerel. Do tell us something, uncle, about the mackerel, and how they fish for them."

"Come along then, boys, down to the beach; we shall see some mackerel there, I daresay, at the little fish-market, if it is not too late.



MACKEREL.

The bulk of the fish are sent away direct to London, I believe; and it always strikes me as the most wonderful reverse in the life of a living creature, that sudden capture and transmission to town of sea-fish. One morning swimming perfectly free, and to all appearance utterly beyond the reach of any civilisation in

the trackless ocean, and lo! in a few hours they are in Bond Street! Strange bathos."

"So like us, uncle, after all," sighs George; "to-day roaming at liberty at Sandborough, in a few days tied to a desk at old Birchem's. Awful bathos!"

"Why, you are a wag, George! but don't let us get sentimental, but try and find our mackerel.

"As I predicted, there are plenty for sale. What a beautifully coloured fish, is it not? Blue, green, and silver! They are full in season now, or rather late perhaps."

"And do they bait for mackerel as one would for a fresh-water fish?" asks Harry.

"They do bait for them, no doubt, Harry, but they are also taken in nets. Long nets, some 120 feet long by about 20 feet deep, are drawn in a circle, the top supported by large corks, whilst the lower part is sunk by leads, and thus they enclose great shoals of fishes. You will very likely see a boat whilst we are here, towing out a net to sea, and then turning gradually in to the shore. It is an exciting

time, as you may imagine, when the net begins to get near the shore; and then sometimes, I believe, the fishermen offer for sale, to some adventurous speculator, the pick of the net for a certain sum, and so the fun and excitement are increased.

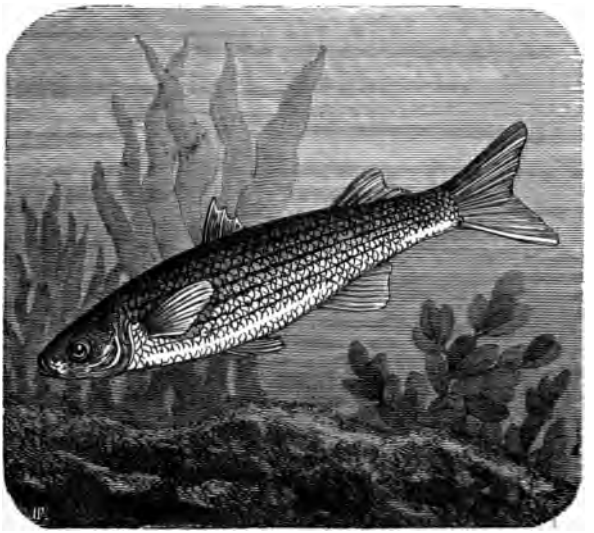
"But they are sometimes baited for with



baits of scarlet cloth, or with pieces of mackerel, I believe, drawn very fast through the water; and thus it is that the mackerel boats dash along as fast as they can, under as much sail as they can carry, and hence also a good breeze has come to be called 'a mackerel breeze.'

"But see here, boys, are some mullet, con-

sidered by epicures a most dainty fish for the table, indeed some call it the 'woodcock of fish,' and it appears to have been considered so for a very long time; for the Romans, who



MULLET.

seemed to have had a fair notion of what was good, held the mullet also in great esteem, as well as the oyster. But I am talking of the red mullet; there is the grey mullet as well;

you will see it has a darkish back, with sort of longitudinal stripes down its sides.

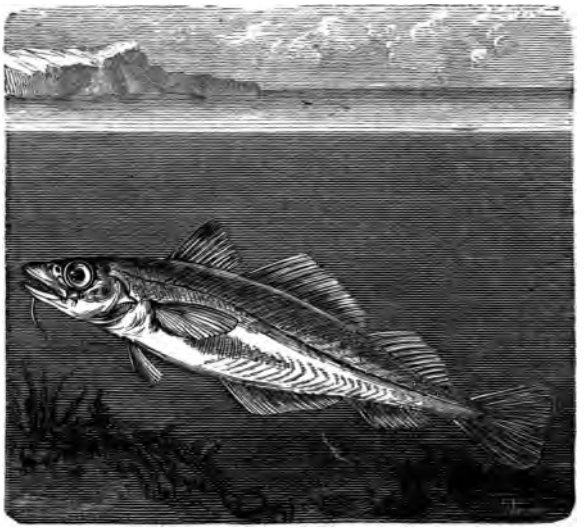
"You may angle for this fish from a boat, provided your tackle be strong, much as you would for a fresh-water fish. He will take a worm, a red one for choice, or even oysters are good baits. But it is well to have two hooks, the first some six inches from the bottom, and the next a foot or so above it.

"I believe the mullet properly belongs to the Mediterranean and other warmer seas, but it is found on our own southern coast, and about summer-time comes up into our rivers, in search of food, perhaps.

"You may have capital fishing from a boat for whiting too, and other fish. Bait with some chopped pieces of herring on several hooks, and lower your line without a float into the water, holding it in your hand till you feel a bite.

"There is no mistaking when the bite comes, such a twitching at once takes place; and should you have had the fortune to have come across a shoal, you may perhaps draw up several at once. Or you may pull up a dog-fish, or a conger-eel,

or the sea-serpent, or any monster. The sport is not a very scientific one, I must admit, but there is a rough charm in the possible variety of the take, nevertheless."



COD.

Here the little party was again joined by John Sturdy, who had brought them a fine cod as a present.

"Ah! that is a fine fish," says Uncle Mark, "and, as you probably know, boys, comes from

the banks of Newfoundland. I believe they find there a certain worm to which they are partial, and return there to spawn; but, before Newfoundland was discovered, we used to catch cod off the coast of Ireland, and, as you see, we can get them in England also; but he is not, like the mullet, a dweller in the warmer, but the colder seas, as a rule."

Uncle Mark took the boys out fishing in a boat that morning, and fine sport they had for some little time, until the motion of the boat became too much for Harry's feelings, and they were obliged to return to shore.

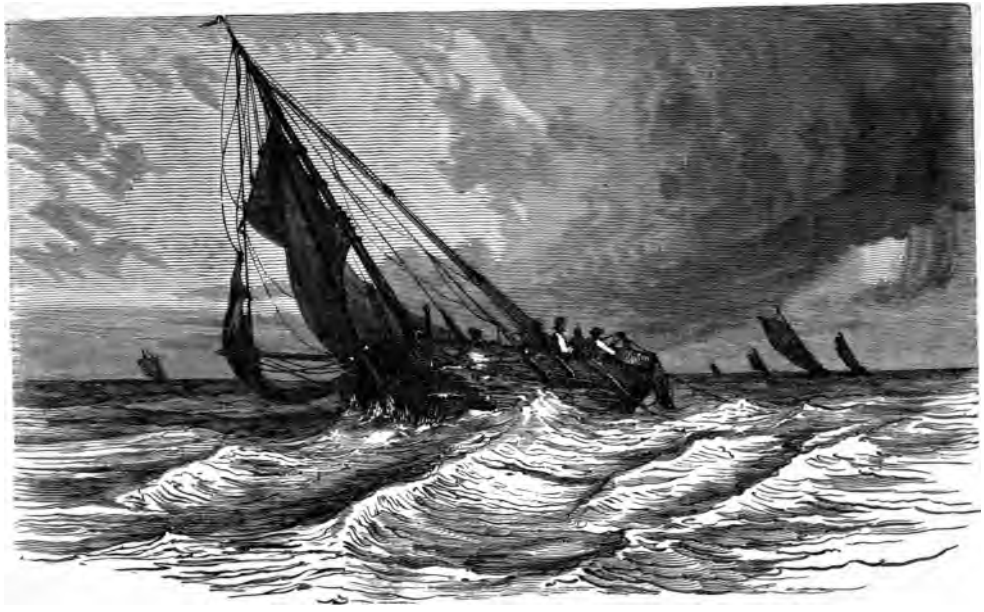
But their greatest delight was in watching John Sturdy's boat, "The Grace," being got ready for sea. She was to sail that very evening, and George and Harry were quite wrapt in the contemplation of the preparations for her departure.

John Sturdy was quite pleased to have them about him, and took the greatest delight in watching their curiosity and answering their questions.

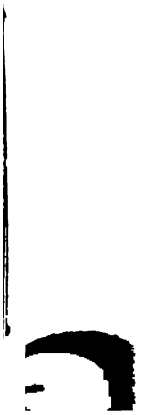
"But why is she called 'The Grace'?" asked

George, as he inspected the trim yellow letters on her black stern.

"Ah! sir," says old Sturdy, looking out straight to sea, at nothing at all, as people do whose minds are contemplating something more steadfastly than their eyes. "Ah! sir, she've borne that name for many a year now, and yet the day I gave it her seems as fresh still as though 'twere only yesterday. Would you like to hear how it all happened? Well then, it's five year ago this very month as I gave her that name, and this was how it came about. My wife and me we lived then in a little house, as you may see from here, with a red roof to it, just at the back of the Anchor Inn, and with us lived the sweetest little daughter ever man need wish to have, and her name was Grace, sir, that's how this boat came to be called 'Grace,' that is—laws, sir, I can bear to talk of it now," old Sturdy continued, looking up at Uncle Mark. "I can bear to think of it now better as the years go by—maybe I feel as I am getting nearer the port where my little Gracey is, no doubt, a-waitin' for me. But



"THE GRACE."



it was a long time afore I got over that black evening, when, as I come towards the shore, I saw one or two o' my mates standing looking, as though something 'd gone wrong, and when, as soon as my boat grated on the beach, one or two of the kind hearts took me by the hand, and I knew at once there was bad news in store."

Old Sturdy stopped for a minute, to change his quid of tobacco, it might be, from one side of his mouth to the other.

"They took me up to the little house, sir, where me and my missis had been so happy, and where Gracey had been the joy of the whole place and the sunbeam of our life; and there was poor wife knocked down with sorrow, and my darling little Gracey lying white and still on the bed, drownded in the midst of her poor innocent little play on the beach."

Poor old Sturdy! even now there was a tear very nearly ready to course down his rough cheek.

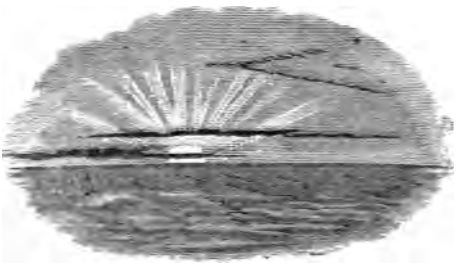
"But I must get to work again, sir—thank you sir," he added, as Uncle Mark gave his

great hand a grip that told of a hearty sympathy; "thank you, sir, I know you've a good heart, sir, as ever beat; and laws, sir, it's those as knows and has loved a little child as can feel for the loss of one. Good-bye, sir; good-bye, young masters, if I may make so bold as to shake you by the hand; and whenever you come to Sandborough, allus remember as old John Sturdy, long as he's alive, is ready to do all he can for you."

And then the honest fellow had leapt into his ship, and the tide being ready, she had slipped into the water, and stood out to sea; Uncle Mark and the boys watching her for a long time, and feeling that "The Grace" carried in her as true and fine a heart, and as stout a friend as they had ever met.

And so the days wore on, and it was time at last to leave Sandborough, and to scamper back to Merryside; and so also the weeks slipped away, and the time also arrived when "good-bye" had to be said to Uncle Mark, and Aunt Fanny, and Jem, and Snap and Dragon, and *all* the other friends that made their happy

world at Merryside. And black Monday came, as come it will for all of us, for grown men as well as schoolboys; and the boxes were packed, and George and Harry went regretfully but bravely back to Dr. Birchem's, feeling that the happy holiday had not been without advantage, whilst, perhaps, they little knew what a void their departure was felt to cause at Merryside Hall, and how much Uncle Mark missed his young companions.





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